Volume Forty-Five, Number One, January *1968*

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In Memory of Guido Cantelli *B. H. Haggin*

Old Friends *John Thompson*

Books in Review

Peter Schrag Joseph Epstein Erich Isaac

Morris Dickstein Mary Ellmann

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Commentary

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LETTERS FROM READERS

The Other America

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Bayard Rustin's article ["The Lessons of the Long Hot Summer," October 1967] in my judgment, points up the need for a vast new commitment of energy and resources in "the other America" which now dwells in the hearts of our large cities.

We know that government alone cannot do the job. We know we must find new answers to these problems which threaten to rip the fabric of America asunder. In my view, it is the resources of the private enterprise system which can best begin to resolve these critical dilemmas. If we can bring the same will and energy which has built the wealthiest society in history to the task of rebuilding the shattered ghettos of our large cities, we can begin to fulfill the heritage of equality of opportunity. It is for this reason that I have introduced in the Senate two bills—one concerning housing and one concerning industrial development, which would make it more profitable for private industry to take on these critical social and economic tasks.

But whatever the solution proposed, we as a government and as people must begin to recognize the awesome challenge we face in ending the blight of poverty. Mr. Rustin's article is a powerful piece of evidence that the job is just beginning.

[Senator] ROBERT F. KENNEDY
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Bayard Rustin has no greater admirer than the writer of this letter. His article generally attests to his wisdom and responsibility. But he does his own great record of thoughtfulness and fairness no service by his careless and unfair summary treatment of the poverty program. For three years now I have tried to get him to give me a week of his time so that I could take him around the country and show him close up just what the program is doing and what it means. I am confident that after such a tour his attitude would change from mere tolerance of the program to enthusiastic support for its . . . achievements.

Rustin and I agree completely that Office of Economic Opportunity programs alone cannot meet all the problems of the ghetto. But deriding or dismissing what the OEO does in fact do is not helpful to the whole situation. It contributes, unintentionally of course, to the feeling that it doesn't really matter much whether you have a war on poverty or not.

A few quick comments on Rustin's allegations:

(1) "The war on poverty was based on the notion that the poor are poor because there is something wrong with them."

Not only is this cruelly inaccurate, but we have been proving in deeds, not just abstractions, that the poor do indeed have the capacity for learning, for working, for directing, for managing. The basic premise of OEO programs is that there is something wrong with *society* for not having provided opportunities to Negroes and to other poor people—and there is great need now to open up such opportunities and to compensate millions of Americans for past failures of society through incomes, jobs, training, health care, etc. Does Rustin deny that these failures of society have in fact made the poor less capable of full participation?

(2) "[OEO] has proceeded to set up a bedlam of community action programs under the delusion that the poor can be helped to organize themselves out of poverty."

This, again, is an inaccurate summary. . . . We have simply, but importantly, resolved that the poor shall be given a role in the development and implementation of local programs. We have indeed given tens of thousands of poor people an opportunity for participation, for leadership, and above all for a sense of dignity and power. Does Rustin decry this? Is he against giving poor Negroes in the ghettos a new voice, a new role, a new power which can contribute to a total commitment by the community? Does he think it is unimportant that about ninety thousand poor people are actually employed by the local community action programs in a variety of jobs—that these poor constitute the vast majority of all poverty program employees?

Rustin refers to "an expenditure of fifty dollars per poor person" by OEO in its present budget. This is careless and misleading arithmetic. Surely, Rustin must know that already almost a million young peo-

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. . . What is the true meaning behind the ritual of breaking the wine goblet after a wedding ceremony?

. . . Which holiday is actually a testimonial to *the Jew as a soldier?*

. . . Why is cheese traditionally served at Chanukah?

. . . Which *vegetables* are NOT permitted at Passover?

. . . What do the graggers (noisemakers) signify?

. . . Which Jewish holiday is dedicated to the planting of trees?

. . . What are the words written on the parchment in a door mezuzah?

. . . What kind of chicken eggs must NOT be eaten with dairy foods?

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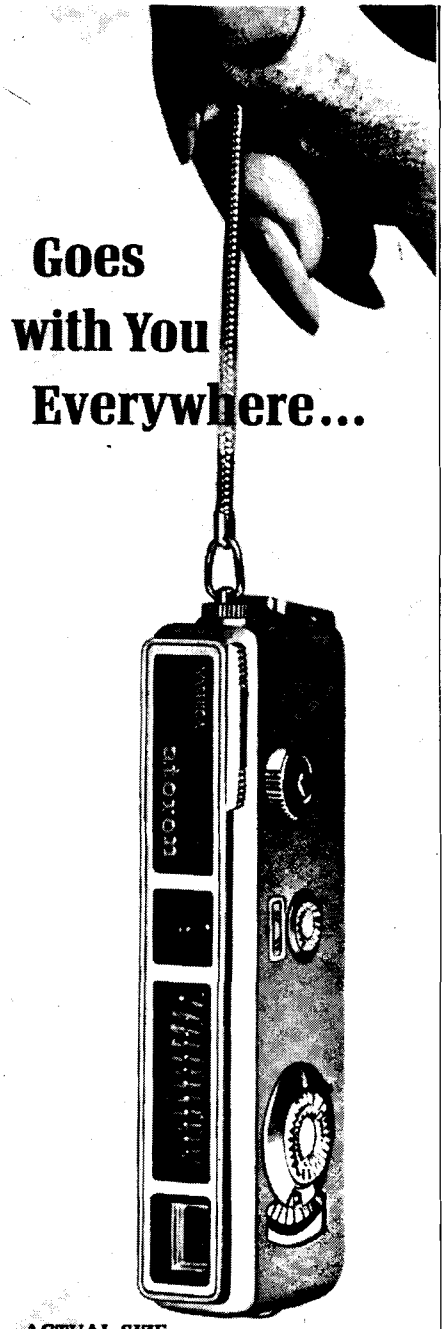

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ple have had Neighborhood Youth Corps jobs at which they earned $1,500 or $2,000 each. He must know that hundreds of thousands of American youngsters are benefiting from year-round Head Start which costs about one thousand dollars per child per year. He must know that it costs over seven thousand dollars to give a Job Corps enrollee the health care, nutrition, and learning to make him a productive member of society.

Finally, I hope that Rustin and all his allies and associates have recognized that in OEO-type programs we have provided positive alternatives to senseless violence and despair. In hundreds of American cities this past summer there was no violence. The Carmichaels and the Browns may be unhappy about this and even blame OEO for "cooling" these cities. But Bayard Rustin should be pleased that poor people are finally being reached with at least some programs that provide real opportunities for people and for their communities.

OEO is not enough. The whole federal program is not enough. I do not blame the White House for this default, nor even the Congress. Above all, I blame the American people generally for not insisting that more be done and stating their willingness to pay whatever price may be required. . . .

HYMAN BOOKBINDER
Assistant Director
Office of Economic Opportunity
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Bayard Rustin's long-standing plea for a liberal-labor-Negro coalition is weaker now than it was before the summer. This is because the program of liberalism is more clearly washed up in the eyes of the American people than ever before. The major riots, let us not forget, occurred in the country's most liberal cities—Detroit, with its outstanding war-on-poverty; Newark, with its top public housing program; Milwaukee; New York City; and finally New Haven, the apple of the liberals' eye. . . .

Men like Rustin should be making a clean break with the Great Society, instead of going down the drain with it. But they continue to advocate more, more, more, along the lines of the Freedom Budget and the State and Local Public Facility Needs study. Of course we need more, but we also need different. Rustin criticizes the war on poverty as not benefiting the poor, but fails to extend this to urban renewal and model cities, to mass transit, to the tax system and the surtax. That is to say, to the heart of LBJ's domestic program.

Rustin knows what "different" means—ghetto control of ghetto programs; taking profit out of the slums instead of pumping more of it in à la Kennedy, Percy, and Johnson; and *redistribution*—redistributing wealth away from the propertied rich and power away from the corporations. Daniel P. Moynihan, whom Rustin quotes favorably throughout his article, has just told ADA to rely on corporate planners to solve America's problems. Is this a position with which we should be confused? Rustin should stop being the liberal and resume being the socialist.

This means constructing a program that is a radical alternative—with explanations to compete with those of the reactionaries and proposals with which a coalition could take the offensive. There is no reason why the links between the crisis at home and the crisis in foreign policy should not be stated clearly. Just because "Nobody said during those past wars that we should cut back on our military expenditures . . ." doesn't mean that we shouldn't start saying precisely that, today.

The construction of that alternative seems remote today, because of the failure of the National Conference for New Politics. But it becomes more necessary every day, as we witness deepening crises and events like LBJ's throttling of Senator Clark's $3 billion proposal to provide jobs in the slums. The need for more will only be met if a new American majority can be brought to understand, by a different explanation from that of repudiated liberalism, the structural basis of our present crisis.

PAUL BOOTH
Chicago, Illinois

MR. RUSTIN writes:

I don't want to argue details with Hyman Bookbinder, particularly now when the reactionaries are attacking the offices of OEO. Though I do not feel unjustified in my criticisms of the OEO, I think it would be a tragedy if this effort were cut back or dismantled by the Dixiecrat-Republican coalition. The OEO program is merely a point of departure; the need now is to go beyond it.

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War Monument from 1948 War of Independence. An ambushed Israeli vehicle on the road from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Come celebrate the anniversary that almost didn't take place.

In six days of war Israel saved what had been created in 1948. This year we will celebrate the twentieth anniversary of that creation. It will be celebrated in songs and dances and pageants and speeches and parades. Why not? That's the way national anniversaries are usually marked. And in Israel there is much to celebrate.

A country has emerged from desert and malarial swamps to flourish in the face of constant peril. So you can be sure there will be lots of singing and dancing and parading.

There'll also be the biggest Purim Festival ever held in Tel Aviv. A "Chagall and the Bible" Exhibition in Jerusalem. A Torch Relay Race from the Maccabean Caves to Jerusalem. The Bringing of the First Fruits Ceremonies in the Jezreel Valley. And more that give this year its distinctive character.

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Still, it's mainly because the twentieth anniversary is taking place that we think you ought to celebrate it with us in Israel.

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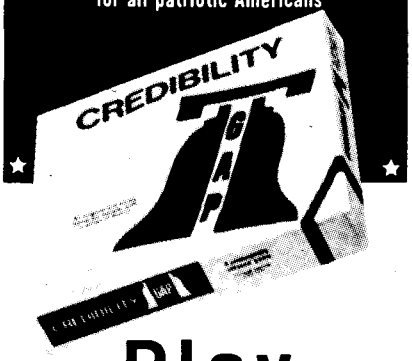

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The OEO has financed various community action programs; has provided useful training to make some of the poor employable; and has done other good things. But it had made no attack upon the *structure* of poverty and has, therefore, necessarily approached the problem in terms of the deficiencies of poor individuals and communities. In the 1967 manpower report of the Department of Labor, it is documented that even in the midst of an unprecedented boom, housing, education, and unemployment in the ghettos are worse than they were when President Johnson declared his war on poverty almost four years ago.

Paul Booth raises some crucial and extremely complex issues. Let me deal with just a few.

When Booth says that "The program of liberalism is more clearly washed up in the eyes of the American people than ever before," I am not sure he knows what a pessimistic observation he is making. For to the extent that a disenchantment with liberal problems is taking place, it is part of a movement to the Right. Americans have become disillusioned not because they want more radical and progressive programs than ever before offered. Rather, they are motivated by backlash racism, the incredible notion that we have "done too much" (when in reality we have done so little). The fact that some of the riots occurred in cities with liberal administrations—Detroit and New Haven in particular—cannot be interpreted as simply as Booth suggests. In general, social upheavals come when people are making gains, but not fast enough. So it was that the CIO was not organized in the depths of the 1932 depression, but some four years later when there was hope. Indeed, the UCLA study of the Watts riot indicates that the activists' leadership comes from the best educated, economically advanced Negroes and that the non-participants and the indifferent were more numerous among those worse off. So I would not interpret the riots as an indictment of the liberal program but as an expression of the fact that the society was not liberal enough, i.e., it promised more than it produced and thus excited aspiration, frustration, and anger.

Mr. Booth counterposes to my advocacy of the Freedom Budget his concern with problems like urban renewal, mass transit, the tax system, etc. Yet, it is precisely to these problems that the Freedom Budget addresses itself. Rather than "reactionary Keynesian" tax cuts which further maldistribute income, it proposes public investment in decent housing, education, transportation, and health for all, and a consequent achievement of real full employment. I am quite prepared to extend my critique to the issues which Booth cites—and that is precisely why I am for the Freedom Budget.

Finally, a word about liberalism and socialism. I have the greatest respect for young activists like Booth who see the need to think through a radical program. But one must relate that program to American politics. America today is socially disillusioned not so much out of the nation's refusal to go beyond liberalism but out of an ugly mood which beats a retreat from liberalism and proposes the solution of problems with a nightstick. Liberalism remains as far to the Left as the nation has gone, even though it is certainly not far enough. I am proud to be a socialist but I also know that an authentic socialist would take his bearings from the living reality. I agree with Booth that our problems are so radical as to demand that we go beyond traditional liberalism but then so do some of the most thoughtful liberals, like John Kenneth Galbraith. It is politically impossible to move the society further to the Left while ignoring the fact that its most leftward political movement in mass politics, as the Chicago conference on New Politics amply demonstrated, is still liberal.

Israel's Mission

To the Editor of Commentary:

We have already had the benefit of Robert Alter's opinions of those Jews who tend to think that Israel is meaningfully Jewish only in the demographic sense of the word in his long letter in a recent issue of the *New York Review of Books*. Segments of that letter have been lifted bodily into his article ["Israel and the Intellectuals"] in the October [1967] issue of Commentary but gain nothing in their new setting. . . . For example, there is the suggestion . . . that the allegedly "mock-Christian Mission theology of classical German Reform Judaism" has been "thoroughly discredited" by the last hundred years of Jewish history. But the "bizarre irony" in this—to use Mr. Alter's

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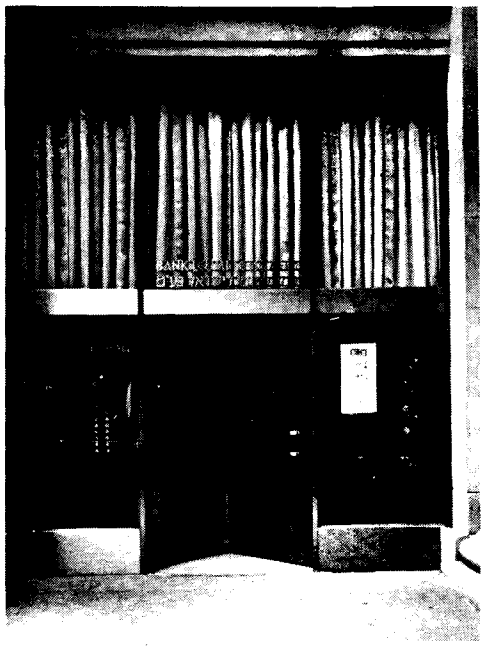

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words—is not the fact that a spokesman for "the modern progressive Jewish intelligentsia" should "revive" this "theology" (which of course never needed to be revived because it was never dead, and which of course too is as intrinsic to Judaism as the Covenant between God and His Chosen People). It is, rather, the fact that a man of Mr. Alter's caliber should imply that tragedies all the way from Kishinev to Auschwitz were Jewish *failures*, that the fundamental tenet of Judaism could be "thoroughly discredited" by the barbaric behavior of Central Europeans which, surely, is the supreme and bizarre irony. Auschwitz proved the need for a Chosen People, if proof indeed were needed; and it is too paradoxical for my non-Zionist mind to understand why he should assert that Petlura or Hitler or any other Fascist could have refuted and discredited our Jewish religion. I am led to believe that Mr. Alter, and many like him, suffers from what David Riesman has, in this very context, discussed in his essay, "A Philosophy for Minority Living." Mr. Alter would be well advised to consider what Riesman described as a traditional Jewish attribute: "the nerve of failure."

The central issue dealt with by Stone and others, and by and large merely jeered at by Alter, is that Israel's claim to be Jewish cannot rest on its character as a state conceived or patterned in accordance with that meaning of the word "Jewish" which has to do with morality, justice, and so on. In this context let me mention that, contrary to what Alter implies, I did not live all that "briefly" in Israel but spent four years there, for the most part working for the Council of the Sephardi Community in Jerusalem. I think that this entitles me to claim a somewhat greater expertise on Israel's social character than those people whom Mr. Alter rightly dismisses as phony experts and of whom he may indeed be one. Equally, I did not write my book after I joined the American Council for Judaism, but nearly a year before; and my anti-Zionism is not based on *a priori* considerations but on my experiences of living in Israel—to which I originally migrated because I was convinced that it really was the "Jewish" state. Of course minorities do not have to be persecuted minorities; but in Israel as presently constituted they are. And this not because of the seemingly accidental

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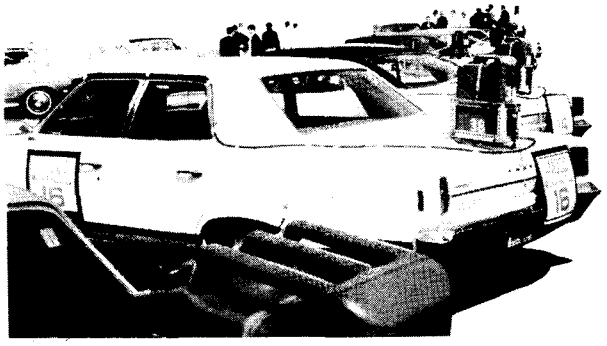

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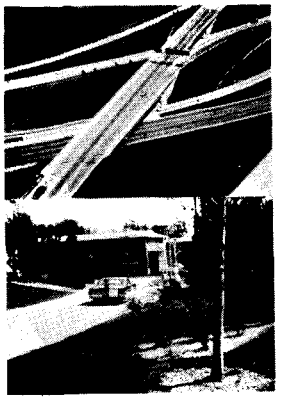

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"combination of cultural and historical circumstances" by which Alter explains the situation in Israel, *but because of the very nature of the state of Israel as originally conceived and presently structured.* Ben Gurion or Dayan are not making "perfectly innocent declarations" when they say that Israel must and will remain a "Jewish" state; and the situation of the Arab minority in Israel cannot blandly be explained away on the basis of the "visible gaps" between "Israel's egalitarian ideals" and political actualities. As the Jewish state, so-called, Israel cannot permit the full and equal participation of Arabs in its social, political, economic, and cultural life and has demonstrated that it has no intention of doing so. Ben Gurion's statement to an Israeli Arab quoted by Stone but not commented upon by Alter, is one illustration of this and is worth repeating here. "Israel is the country of the Jews and only of the Jews," said Ben Gurion. "Every Arab who lives here has the same rights as any minority citizen in any country in the world, but he must admit the fact that he lives in a Jewish country." Legal inequality of rights is, incidentally, built into Israel's emerging constitution, for instance in the Law of Return and in the Jewish Agency/World Zionist Organization Status Law which give Jews rights and statuses in Israel not enjoyed by Israeli Arabs. . . .

The disabilities from which the Oriental Jews suffer in Israel are no less fundamental and even more difficult to analyze in a few words than those of the Israeli Arabs. They too are inherent in the structure of Israel and in the Zionist philosophy which brought that country into being. My observations while living in Israel led me to the profoundly depressing conclusion that the dominant European minority in Israel, accepting the validity of anti-Semitic stereotypes, saw as the only path to Jewish redemption the one which led to refashioning the Jews in the image of those who hated them most—a common enough psychological phenomenon when the nerve of failure—the nerve to be what you are despite the contumely of others—gives way to a failure of nerve. The European Jews have shown remarkable agility in achieving this ambition but, for all sorts of reasons, feel compulsively obliged to force the same achievement on the Oriental Jews too,

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who have, to date, fortunately shown little interest in this . . . .

I refuse to laud this newly Aryanized Jew for two reasons. Most essentially because, *come what may*, I want to suffer *because of* my nerve of failure and not suffer *from* a failure of nerve. An editorial in one of the Jewish newspapers here exulted, immediately after the recent war, "The glorious fighters of Israel have made an automatic hero of every Jew in America, yea, of the world. Because of Israel's bravery and shining courage Jews today stand ten feet tall." I do not believe that Jewish greatness, bravery, courage, or stature can be or ever have been achieved in this way; rather, they are to be achieved only through affirming our unconditional adherence to the notion that morality is the only obligation that matters.

Secondly and secondarily I deplore the Prussian triumphalism of Israel because I can see only too clearly where it is leading: to Israel's ultimate discomfiture. Your might is worthless, Nebuchadnezzar!

MICHAEL SELZER

New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As a so-called "intellectual Jew," I would like to second Robert Alter's contention that the Israeli "victory was a profoundly unsettling experience." . . .

In an era of militant nationalisms all over the world, the very idea of an Israeli version of the *Blitzkrieg*, is enough to make an idealist shudder. . . .

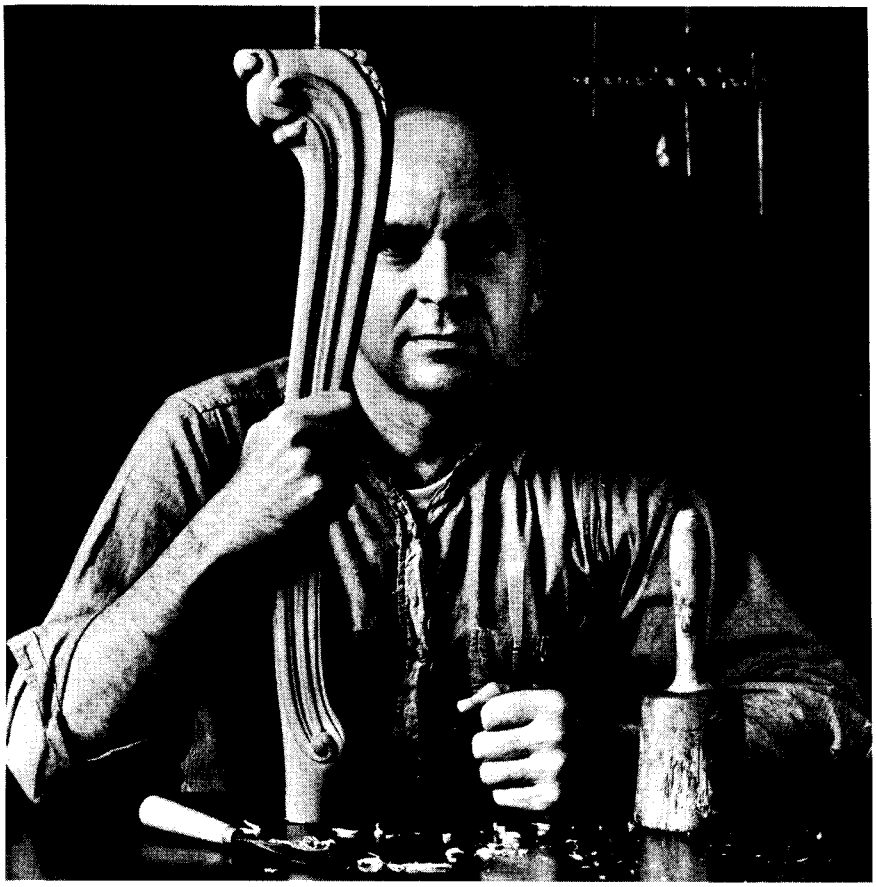
In an imperfect world with a less than perfect (to say the least) world law (as embodied in the United Nations), no one can say that Israel had no right to defend itself. But to glory in victory by force of arms is another story.

JEROME S. THALER

Peekskill, New York

MR. ALTER writes:

Let me begin with matters of historical fact. It is simply false to pretend that the idea of Mission or the concomitant notion of the Jews as a non-national spiritual community is "as intrinsic to Judaism as the Covenant." While the Covenant is clearly and repeatedly stressed in classical Jewish sources beginning with Genesis, Mission is barely present at all in those sources, except for the Suffering Servant passages of deutero-Isaiah —and then only if one hews closer



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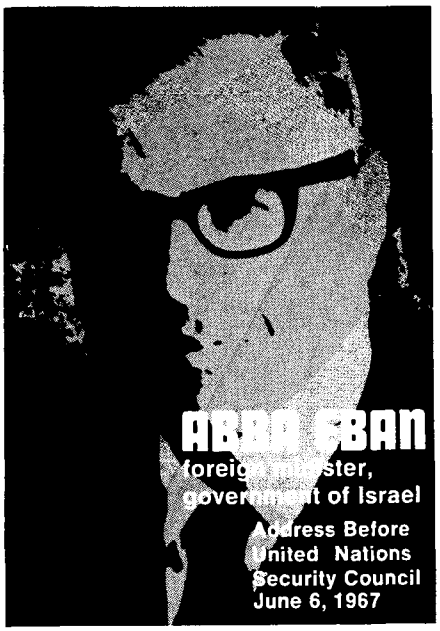

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to the Christian interpretation than that of Jewish tradition, which, if anything, tends to be anti-Mission (see, e.g., Maimonides's responsum on the dangers of teaching Torah to the Gentiles).

It was the idea of humanity that was discredited by Auschwitz, not "our Jewish religion," and in any case the inference that I attributed the refutation of Mission theology solely or chiefly to the Nazis and their like is quite fantastic. The hundred years of Jewish history to which I referred involve stirring as well as horrifying events, the creation of a viable Jewish state and a renascence of Jewish culture as well as the Holocaust. Through the examination of their own consciousness against the background of history, most Jews have discovered they simply could not believe that they had a divinely appointed mission to the Gentiles, that they were a confessional group and in no way a people, or any of the other tenets of the program of interim assimilation concocted by those 19th-century pseudo-religionists so anxious to be thought of as "Germans of the Mosaic persuasion." It is instructive as well as admirable that last June spokesmen for American Reform Judaism, less than a century after the anti-Zionism of the Pittsburgh Platform, were among the first to denounce the cabal against Israel among American Christian leaders.

On the subject of living as a minority or a majority, I'm afraid Mr. Selzer beclouds the issues by invoking David Riesman's double-talk—which, it is interesting to note, is now being circulated by a Beirut government publication. The collective refusal of Jews to continue in the role of victim surely does not imply that they must assume the role of their traditional victimizers, and the comparison between Israelis and Nazis upon which Mr. Selzer—like the Russians and Arabs—insists is even falser than it is morally offensive. (Here let me also point out to Mr. Thaler that it would do no violence to his idealism to recognize a radical difference between Israel's necessary defensive war waged against surrounding armies poised to attack and Hitler's murderous onslaught against the civilian masses of innocent nations. The *only* similarity is in the swiftness of the initial victory.) One wonders what Mr. Selzer finds that is "Prussian" about Israel's democratized citizens' army (it doesn't even march in step!), and that term is even more grotesquely inapplicable to Israel's cultural and moral climate. A comparison of the Israeli and American press, moreover, reveals that it was *Time* and *Life* that struck notes of "triumphalism" after the war, while *Ha'Aretz, Ma'ariv, Yediot Aharonot,* etc., stressed rather a sense of gratitude, relief, pride saddened by the awareness of the war dead.

In the matter of Israel's minorities, Mr. Selzer refuses to admit the self-evident distinction between social prejudice and official persecution. Many Israelis of European origin do regrettably assume an intrinsic superiority to people from the Arab world, but all Israeli citizens are equal before the law. The Law of Return enables Jewish immigrants to become citizens without a process of naturalization, for, in the terms of the Balfour Declaration, the country *is* conceived as a Jewish homeland, but Gentiles may become citizens through other procedures and they enjoy the same rights after the fact of citizenship. The chief historical circumstance I had in mind as a cause of Israeli suspicion (though, remarkably, *not* hatred) of its Arab minority is of course the fact that the Arabs of the surrounding states have been dedicated for twenty years to the extirpation of Israel, have conducted campaigns of terror against Jewish civilian populations throughout this period, and, indeed, as far back as the early 20's. This essential negative circumstance is manifestly one for which Israel cannot be held accountable.

Since Mr. Selzer is at pains to establish his own credentials, a note of identification on the Council of the Sephardi Community may be helpful for American readers. It is a special-interest group organized on a racist bias, and as anyone who reads its monthly newsletter can testify, its vision of Israeli politics and culture is frequently paranoid. Mr. Selzer's association with this group during his four years in Jerusalem explains why he has such peculiar notions about Israel and Israeli minorities. He was in his work for the Sephardi Council what he is in his present work for the anti-Zionist American Council for Judaism—essentially a propagandist, and it is therefore hardly surprising that he should be so given to obfuscation, confusion of terms, offensive pejoratives, and misrepresentations.

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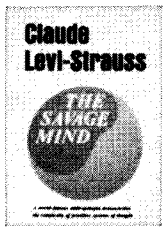

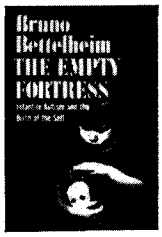

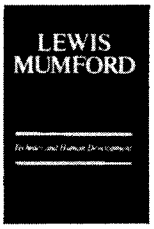

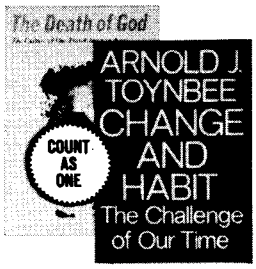

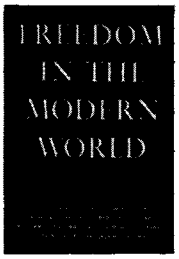

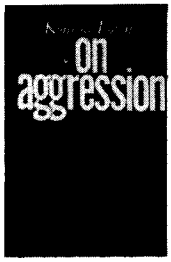

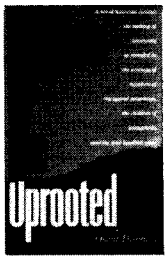

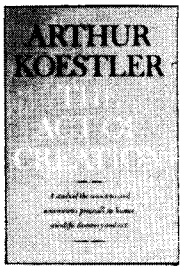

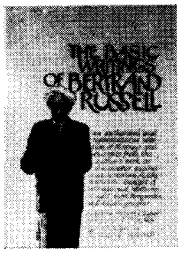

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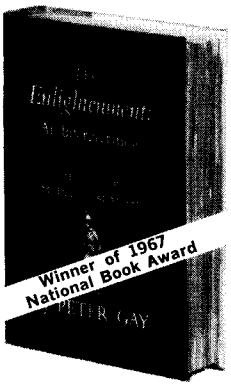

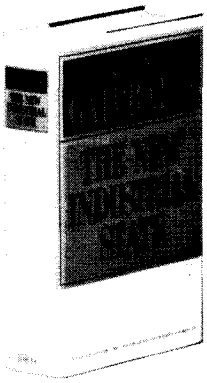

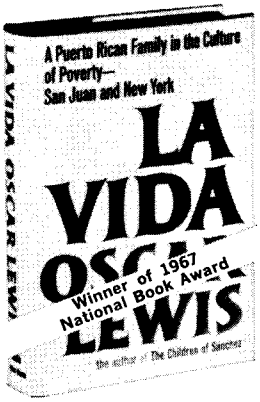
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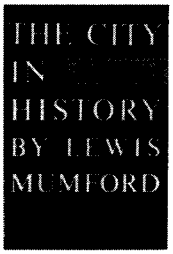

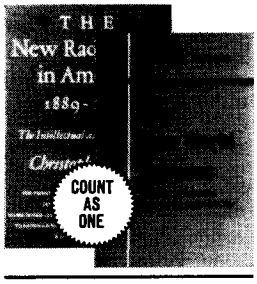

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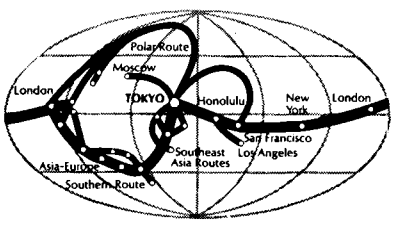

Radicals & Liberals

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is not too late, I hope, to add a word to your September [1967] symposium, "Liberal Anti-Communism Revisited."

The impression is created, not only by the editor's questions but by the answers of several of the respondents, that it was the anti-Communism of some liberals that led them to that witting or unwitting cooperation with the CIA which was revealed by *Ramparts* magazine. A number of writers seem to suggest that these liberals can certify to having purged themselves of the sinister association only by giving up the opposition to Communism that led them to it.

The logic of the suggestion escapes me. Anti-capitalism led many people, socialists as well as liberals, to cooperate with Stalin and to accept his subsidies and even his blood purges. Does repudiation of such cooperation require abandonment of the anti-capitalism that led to it?

Liberals who were appalled after the war by the expansion of the Stalinist blight over Europe and Asia have infinitely more to their credit than those who applauded or worked for it or who were indifferent to it. If some of them, in desperation over the inadequacy of their resources in stemming this expansion, resigned themselves to accepting the tainted and tainting resources of the CIA, they were mistaken, gravely mistaken. Other, and honorable, sources were available but not enough effort was expended to explore them openly and frankly. But there are mistakes and mistakes. The punitive compensation some critics now call upon them to pay for their mistake is not only harsh but unjustified and demoralizing.

The desperation to which I refer was not unique to the liberals. It was shared by more than one American who regarded himself as a revolutionary radical. One of them, for example, wrote in 1952 that to repulse Communism in Europe, the Marshall Plan was inadequate and a qualified socialist opposition was still to be constituted. Therefore, he concluded, "In a transition period, I feel that both our government and all kinds of private groups should help subsidize those organizations capable of fighting Stalinism from the Left. That would include trade unions, nationalist movements, all types of

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These lines appeared in a book entitled *The Counterfeit Revolution*. Its author was Sidney Lens, the former head of a dissident left-wing Trotskyist group. He is now a prominent leader of the New Left and "New Politics" movements. Nevertheless, his colleagues in these movements, from *Ramparts* magazine and elsewhere, do not seem to demand that he repudiate and do penance for being one of the pioneers of the concept that the CIA eventually fostered so disastrously. Unlike some of the belated and imperious critics of the liberal anti-Communists, the New-Left leaders welcome Lens in the fight for the cause. I, like my friends, who never had or would have any association with the CIA or its equivalents elsewhere, find that mighty tolerant.

MAX SHACHTMAN
Floral Park, Long Island

Dialogues

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I read Milton Himmelfarb's article—especially the last section, "Finally, Religion"—with a deep sense of relief ["In the Light of Israel's Victory," October 1967]. Rabbi Richard L. Rubenstein's argument in *After Auschwitz* is the sort of thing a student of Christian theology cannot easily recover from. So it is heartening to know that if some Jewish thinkers have looked at history and abandoned all belief in a Lord of history, others, who were bashful about using the word "God," have lost some of that bashfulness "in the light of Israel's victory." This "little religious thing" is perhaps the best thing to come out of the Arab-Israeli war.

Many Christian ecumenists are lamenting the setback which Jewish-Christian dialogue has suffered because of the silence which official Christendom felt constrained to keep when the war broke out. But as I see it, it is more important that Jews should learn how to talk to God than to Christians.

PAUL K. JEWETT
Department of Theology
Fuller Theological
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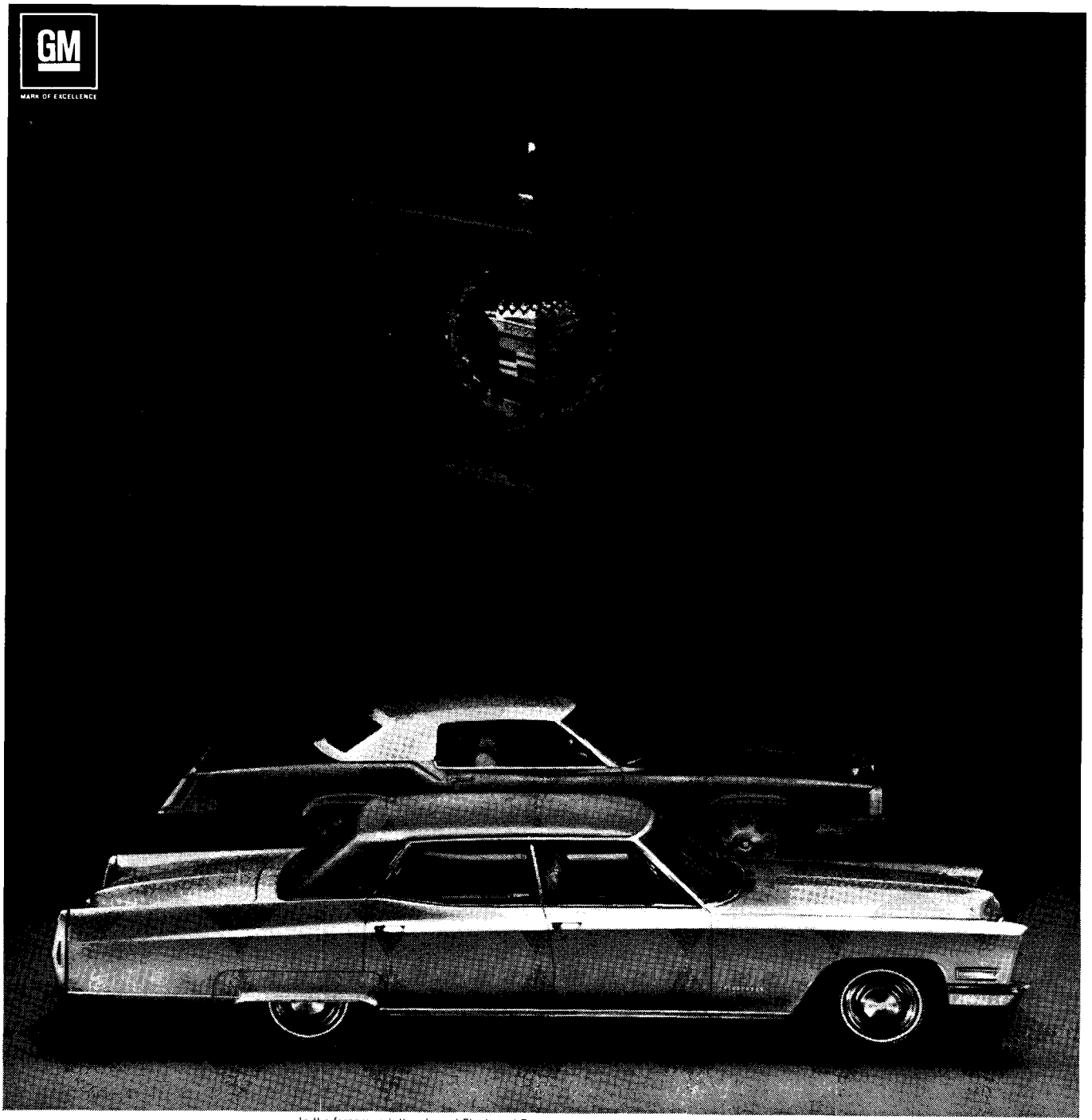

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GEORGE F. KENNAN: THE HEART OF A DIPLOMAT

GEORGE KATEB

EXCEPT FOR A brief interval, George Kennan has lived his adult life in complaint. Early in his sad, haunting memoirs,* he comments on a note he wrote to Loy Henderson in June 1941, in which he urged that the United States not follow Churchill's lead in "extending moral support" to Russia in its struggle with Germany. Kennan says, "In this reaction . . . there was embodied the essence of the disagreement that was to hold me in opposition to our governmental policy for some five years to come; hold me in opposition until the movement of the pendulum of official thinking from left to right would bring it close to my own outlook in the years 1946 to 1948, only to carry it away once more in the other direction, with the oversimplified and highly militarized view of the Russian problem that came to prevail after 1949." In a long career as a man of affairs, most of it in the time covered by this book, Kennan experienced the pleasure of working for purposes he accepted, for only two or three years. Anyone familiar with Kennan's writings since 1950—works of political history deliberately conceived with the problems of the present in mind, and works of political analysis made sharper and more urgent by a sense of the mistakes and cowardices of the past—knows that after his retirement he maintained his posture of disagreement. All in all, close to power or standing on the outside, studying American diplomatic history or advising those who were making history, Kennan has been a deeply dissatisfied man. His recent statements on the war in Vietnam are simply the latest expressions of that dissatisfaction.

What then is the trouble? What are Kennan's grievances? His first book, *American Diplomacy* (1951), contains the elements of his argument, which later books and now his *Memoirs* fill out and painfully illustrate. Kennan's indictment is threefold. First, American foreign policy has traditionally been infected by a legalist tendency. American statesmen, from the time of the war with Spain, have had a fetishistic attitude toward rules, principles, treaties, international law, international organizations. Many of them lawyers, they have failed to see that words on a page, declarations of good intentions, pledges of honor and friendship, are only that—words on a page. If these words do not register the realities of power in the world, they are trivial and misleading. They are written to be violated; they have no autonomous strength of their own; they are not self-enforcing. "Covenants without the sword are but words." To produce a treaty is not, by itself, to solve a problem. To think otherwise, to think as so many American leaders have thought, is to confuse the public, and to prepare the way for extreme and irrational disappointment, on the part both of the people and their leaders.

From that disappointment, as well as from other sources, comes the second main fault of American foreign policy, which is to place American conduct in bondage to very crude and undiscriminating moral precepts. Kennan is appalled by the national habit of picturing the struggles of nations as contests between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. Once aroused from its self-absorption, America enters the world arena in a frenzy to do good and to punish the wicked; even more, to reform the wicked and remake them after the democratic model. The limitless energy of the American people has been too often employed in behalf of an arrogant, but unselfconscious righteousness that works dreadful cruelty in order to be overbearingly kind. It is as if the United States were incapable of moderation, and hence of realism. Its people cannot see that in most cases players and opponents in the international scene (including themselves) are equally driven by worldly or "sinful" motives, or are equally confronted by terrible necessities, or are guided by equally sincere though incompatible ideals. America has always lacked the tragic sense. And its leaders have done nothing to impart that sense. As an example of the failure of leadership Kennan recounts, toward the end of the *Memoirs,* his dispute with Dulles over the admission of China to the United Nations. He did not advocate its admission; he only wished that the United States not press for its exclusion. Dulles said America had to press: otherwise American public opinion would be con-

GEORGE KATEB, who teaches political science at Amherst, is the author of *Utopia and Its Enemies.* Mr. Kateb contributed "Kennedy as Statesman" to our June 1966 issue.

* *Memoirs: 1925-1950,* Atlantic-Little, Brown, 503 pp., $10.00.

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fused and lessen its support for the tough policies of its government. "I said that I could very well understand this but that I shuddered over the implications of it; for it implied that we could not adopt an adequate defense position without working our people up into an emotional state, and this emotional state, rather than a cool and unemotional appraisal of national interest, would then have to be the determinant of our action."

The third charge made by Kennan is that American foreign policy has been frequently shaped by domestic political pressures of the most shortsighted and self-interested kind. Near the end of the Second World War, Kennan wrote in his diary,* "Our government is technically incapable of conceiving and promulgating a long-term consistent policy toward areas remote from its own territory. Our actions in the field of foreign affairs are the convulsive reactions of politicians to an internal political life dominated by vocal minorities." Too often a policy-maker asked himself not: "How effective is what I am doing in terms of the impact it makes on our world environment?" but: "How do I look, in the mirror of domestic American opinion, as I do it? Do I look shrewd, determined, defiantly patriotic, imbued with the necessary vigilance before the wiles of foreign governments?"

Taken together, these elements add up to one of the most sustained onslaughts on American political capacities ever made. That Tocqueville suggested the same failings more than a century ago hardly makes it easier for Kennan to adopt a philosophical attitude. That other countries, especially other democracies, suffer from the same failings would doubtless give Kennan little consolation, even if such an easily demonstrable fact entered his purview. Kennan is quite obviously beyond consolation. Whenever a touch of satisfaction shows itself in any of his writing, its source is rarely the feeling that the American government has skillfully executed some policy intelligently prepared; luck or superabundant resources have come to its rescue.

IT IS THE American character, in sum, against which Kennan mounts his attack. To be sure, he is generous toward individual Americans: almost every time he introduces a personage in his *Memoirs,* he finds something flattering to say. (A rare exception is Ambassador Joseph E. Davies.) Kennan is even nice to Dean Acheson, who a few years ago spoke scurrilous words against him in lectures delivered at the University of Connecticut. In the first volume of his study of Soviet-American relations during 1917-1920, *Russia Leaves the War,* Kennan has a just and beautiful sentence for John Reed, the author of *Ten Days that Shook the World.* Kennan writes of that young man whose romantic passion he finds unacceptable: "And through this tale, as through the whole bizarre record of his adventures and mistakes, there runs the reflection of a blazing honesty and a purity of idealism that did unintended credit to the American society that had produced him, the merits of which he himself understood so poorly." In that small book of historical regrets, *American Diplomacy,* Kennan can still find it possible to say: "I should be most unhappy if anything said in these lectures should seem a mark of disrespect for such men as John Hay, Elihu Root, Charles Evans Hughes, or Henry Stimson. These men embodied that pattern of integrity of mind and spirit, moderation and delicacy of character, irreproachable loyalty in personal relations, modesty of person combined with dignity of office, and kindliness and generosity in the approach to all who were weaker and more dependent, which constitutes, it seems to me, our finest contribution to the variety of the human species in this world and comes closest to embodying our national ideal and genius."

But it cannot be denied that there is an immense difference of temperament that separates Kennan from his country. His congenital tendencies to feel remote and distinct from all around him (described with a chilling honesty and remarkable expressive force in the first chapter of the *Memoirs*) were reinforced both by his vocation as diplomat and by hateful changes in American life. At the start of his career he realized, after a brief trip home, that "Increasingly, now, I would not be a part of my country, although what it had once been would remain a part of me. I, not being a part of it, would nevertheless understand it. It, being still to some extent a part of me, would nevertheless not understand me." He says he is truly at home only in the 18th century, which for him was the time of clarity, awareness of limitations in life, and, most important, realism.

Kennan's best statement of his realism is in *Realities of American Foreign Policy* (1954). Its underlying philosophical premise is that the good behavior we demand of individuals in a settled society cannot possibly be the standard for the behavior of states. Though not named, Hobbes stands in the background of Kennan's thought. Relations among sovereign states are so filled with peril, yet additionally so filled with opportunities for aggrandizement, that ordinary human nature must be expected, in this anarchy, to be obsessed with power, with its acquisition, maintenance, extension, and display. Against this force of human nature nothing moral can prevail. ". . . Let us not assume that the *purposes* of states, as distinct from their methods, are fit subjects for measurement in moral terms." The world is a bad place: "strife, suspicion, and rivalry" (as Kennan puts it in his great book, *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin*) are the facts of its inter-

* Selections from Kennan's diaries are interspersed throughout the *Memoirs.* Sometimes he follows a selection with a comment meant to qualify it in the light of afterthought or later events.

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national life. Worldliness is the only sanity, the worldliness which Kennan ascribes to the Hapsburg court in the old Austro-Hungarian Empire and which Western democrats found to possess "too much charm, too much skepticism and despair, too little righteousness, too great a tolerance of human weakness." (Again, these words come from *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin*.) Concretely, the American national interest is defined by the need ". . . to prevent the gathering together of the military-industrial potential of the entire Eurasian land mass under a single power threatening to the interests of the insular and maritime portions of the globe." The five great centers of military-industrial strength are America, Britain, Japan, Germany, and Russia. Britain and Japan are safe; Germany must remain safe. That should be the key consideration of American foreign policy.

KENNAN DOES NOT fret about the underdeveloped countries, and is supported in his indifference by the weight of his temperament. At the beginning of the *Memoirs*, he tells us that he was never able to "identify" with the exploited anywhere. And in *Russia, the Atom and the West* (1958), he questions the urgency felt for rapid economic development, and rejects ". . . the suggestion that our generation in the West has some sort of a cosmic guilt or obligation *vis-à-vis* the underdeveloped parts of the world." In an extraordinary and untypically hasty judgment he says, "The Marxists claim, of course, that colonialism invariably represented a massive and cruel exploitation of the colonial peoples. I am sure that honest study would reveal the thesis to be quite fallacious. Advantages, injuries, and sacrifices were incurred on both sides. Today these things are largely bygones."

In candor, it must be said that Kennan does not sustain his realism through all his writing. Leaving aside for the moment his response to Stalinist Russia, we can detect a number of serious qualifications of that realism. I point these things out not to censure Kennan, but only to suggest that he, like any realist, must now and then be mercifully led away from his philosophy to utterances and attitudes that betray some tenderness.

Of such qualifications the first is that with one part of his soul he hates politics. Though he has spent much of his life as a servant of power, he shows no delight in the horrible beauty of its effects; he never seems to have been intoxicated by the pleasures of action and manipulation. It can only be a deep moral sense that has kept him alive to the brute fact that the use of power means pain and loss for some, and corrupt pride for others. In this regard he resembles Senator Fulbright more than any other American statesman. Quite in passing, he refers in *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin* to "the cruelty of politics and . . . the personal amorality which is the concomitant of high political authority." But that passing remark is not casual: Kennan's true mind is expressed. It is expressed again in a majestic passage in the *Memoirs*: "Objectives were normally vainglorious, unreal, extravagant, even pathetic—little likely to be realized, scarcely to be taken seriously. People had to have them, or to believe they had them. It was part of their weakness as human beings. But methods were another matter. These were real. It was out of their immediate effects that the quality of life was really molded."

A second qualification comes out in Kennan's reflections on the future of Soviet society. Writing in the 1950's on this matter, he indicated that perhaps one day the Soviet Union could evolve into a nation that was more humane domestically. Supposedly, such an outcome would be beneficial because a less totalitarian society is less of a threat to the world: it contains fewer internal tensions which, in a sinister manner, are projected onto international relations. There was no need for Russia to become a democracy. In any case, it is presumptuous to insist that others be what we are: ". . . let us not assume that our moral values, based as they are on the specifics of our national tradition and the various religious outlooks represented in our country, necessarily have validity for people everywhere." As a good American, Kennan could comfortably espouse such relativism. But no one who read him could doubt that some part of his hope for a better Russian future derived from the simple wish to see the Russian people enjoy more freedom and security—for their own sake. The mask of relativism falls off now and then to disclose a man who ponders other things than power.

A third qualification concerns Kennan's role in the formulation of the Truman Doctrine for Greece and Turkey. He approved the assistance given to these countries for the purpose of resisting Communist pressure. But the reasons for his approval are inconsistent. On the one hand, he took exception to the passages in Truman's statement that made it seem as if the United States were engaged in a struggle to defend democracy wherever it was threatened, or were indeed aiding Greece in order to keep it democratic. He found such language altogether too sweeping and too emotional—too unrealistic. On the other hand, he could warn in a speech to the War College that the defense of Europe against Communism was not a problem of "external security alone." He said, "Remember that in abandoning Europe we would be abandoning not only the fountainheads of most of our own culture and tradition; we would also be abandoning almost all the other areas in the world where progressive representative government is a working proposition. We would be placing ourselves in the position of a lonely country, culturally and politically. To maintain confidence in our own traditions and institutions, we would henceforth have to whistle

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loudly in the dark. I am not sure that whistling could be loud enough to do the trick." I imagine that this last opinion could be seen as a "higher" realism; but I would prefer to see it as an unmistakable moral commitment that does honor to its author.

QUALIFIED or not, realism is the principle by which Kennan professes to have governed his career of advice and policy-making. And the American response to the events of the 30's and the war years constantly offended his realism. Kennan's reputation since 1950 is that of a man warning against overreaction to Soviet moves, pleading for a non-military solution to the problems of divided German and communized Eastern Europe, cautioning against the view of the Soviet leadership as a band of devils, insisting that his principles could in no way justify American intervention in Vietnam. I suppose it would be fair to say that in the last fifteen years or so, he had been closer to Adlai Stevenson in outlook than to any other prominent American.

But the Kennan of the 30's and 40's would seem to be, at first sight, radically divergent from the Kennan we think of today. He would claim that he has been consistent all through the years; that his realism and awareness of limitations in life accounted for his earlier positions as they accounted for the more recent ones. He would claim that the death of Stalin, and the rupture between Russia and China, have radically transformed our relations to Communist states, and permit us to contemplate possibilities of cooperation with at least Russia. It may be remarked incidentally, however, that Kennan has never made clear how Russia's international behavior has, in fact, changed since these momentous events. Some would say that the old Soviet malignity is still there, as cunning and as resourceful as ever, and has left the old and stable European field for fields more exploitable, like Africa and Latin America. Some would say that there is doubtless continuity in Soviet behavior from Stalin's time to our own, but that that behavior has always been marked by essentially defensive and extremely prudent purposes: that Khrushchev and his successors are no different from Stalin, they are only more likable and use much less terror at home. A few would even say that Stalin's successors have been interventionist and energetic in ways that Stalin himself would have found deplorable. Who can tell with any certainty?

In any case, a mere mention of what Kennan stood for as a young diplomat is truly amazing.

Making allowance for the later, and comparatively minor revisions which he records as he goes along, we still arrive at the following series of opinions of events as they unfolded. Writing about himself at the beginning of his career, he said: "Never—neither then nor at any later date—did I consider the Soviet Union a fit ally or associate, actual or potential, for this country." A persistent theme of the *Memoirs*, as it is of much of his other books, is that the need to rely on the power of the Soviet Union in coming to terms with Nazi Germany was an unprecedented catastrophe—so monstrous was the Stalinist regime, so unyielding in its hatred of the West, so bent on destroying Western civilization was it. Russian fear for its security in the 30's is discounted as not being genuine: the paranoia of Soviet ideology and the convenience of attributing hostile intent to outsiders for the purpose of intensifying repression at home are considered the main determinants of Stalin's foreign policy.* He deplored the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire after World War I, because he felt that one of the props of European stability had been removed. (How odd of Kennan to think, as he does, that the problems resulting from World War I could have been solved by recreating the conditions that helped bring on the war.) In thrall to this nostalgia, he came to Prague at the time of Munich without that "sentimental enthusiasm" for Benes and the Czech Republic that others had. He gave a qualified endorsement to the Munich agreement; to the forces unleashed by Hitler, Czechoslovakia had been "tragically slow in adjusting herself." He wrote off any possibility of cooperating with the Soviets to restrain Hitler. In 1940, Kennan could say that Hitler was "acting in the best traditions of German nationalism." When at last Russia and America were wartime allies, he remained rigid in his antagonism, and wanted America to be as aloof from Russia as practicable. Needless to say, he was distressed by the Yalta agreements, and by the creation of the United Nations Organization. After the war, he opposed denazification, the trial of war criminals, and all policies that looked to retribution or punishment. And he opposed extending any further aid to the Soviet Union at the war's end.

In explanation of the latter position, he recounts a journey he took through Russia shortly after the cessation of hostilities, when he saw the extent of the ruin. He acknowledges that "The sufferings they had recently undergone were enormous. These sufferings had been incurred partly in our own cause." But our indebtedness to the Soviet Union should not be allowed to blind us to the enormity of Stalin's regime. In a moral accounting that was, one can reasonably think, so delicate as to be callous, Kennan concluded: "People and regime . . . were bound together in a common dialectical relationship, so that you could not help people without helping regime, and you could not harm regime without harming people. In these circumstances it was better, surely, to try neither to help nor to harm, but rather to leave people

* It must be said that in his *Soviet Foreign Policy 1917-1941* (1960), Kennan's emphasis is greatly altered. His masterly exposition here stresses the perils Russia did indeed face.

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alone. It was, after all, their predicament, not ours."

Are these the views of a realist—even a qualified realist, a realist bred in the democratic tradition? By some narrow definition perhaps they are. But is a realist supposed to be so certain that a force he hates cannot be used to serve his own aims? Can a realist be so choosy in the matter of friends and enemies? Was there not something besides realism at work in Kennan's mind during this period of time?

I suggest that Kennan sounds very much like a European burgher, filled with an evangelical anti-Communism, and prepared to sanction almost any remedy for Communism if a really manageable one could be found. By no means can Kennan lay claim to the tradition of Talleyrand. He may say that Germany "was a country with which I was never able to identify extensively in the personal sense." It nevertheless is true that the sentiments —and sentiments there assuredly are—implicit in his whole line of reasoning in the 30's and 40's are unmistakably pro-German. They are the kind one associates with the old established classes in much of Europe, especially Central and Eastern Europe.

A crystallization of these sentiments can be found in an anecdote Kennan tells on himself. In September 1945 he made a short trip to Finland from Russia. On entering Finland, he records, "A peasant cart drove up with a family in the back. The family might well be hungry, but the horse was fat and sleek and trotted with a happy briskness which no Russian horse possesses. Over the entire scene there lay the efficiency, the trimness, the quietness, and the boredom of bourgeois civilization; and these qualities smote with triple effect on the senses of a traveler long removed from the impressions of bourgeois environment." Who would wish to deny him his revulsion for Stalinism? Still, revulsion is not the usual basis for a realist policy.

THERE ARE several places in the *Memoirs* where Kennan's own emotionalism is vividly present. He says, ". . . I was opposed to any elaborate program of denazification. I had no sympathy with the Nazi leaders; but I was most reluctant to see us associate ourselves with the Russians in judging and punishing their conduct." The sight of German prisoners of war marching through Moscow struck him as odious, and forced on him the recognition that ". . . I stood temperamentally outside the passions of war—and always would." Knowledge of the Katyn massacre so unbalanced Kennan that he could say, "What was bothering Stalin was not, . . . just the desire to have a 'friendly government' on the other side of the Polish frontier. What was bothering him was the need for the collaboration of any future Polish political authority in repressing evidences and memories of actions by Soviet police authorities in the period 1939-1941, for which no adequate and respectable excuse could ever be found." Stories of other Russian atrocities led him to ask, "Was this . . . the sort of victory we had hoped for? Was the price not such as to make a large portion of the victory unreal?" The Soviet occupation of East Prussia he reckoned as a disaster that "has no parallel in modern European experience." He says shockingly that "I cannot recall that I felt any great elation over the end of the war in Europe" (and with marvelous candor then recounts his disdain for the victory celebration in Moscow).

A true realism is even-handed. It does not consist in believing that one crime excuses another or that an allied dictator is less heinous than an enemy dictator. But it does demand sensitivity to the distinction between the aggressor and his victim, however appalling the victim. It does demand more sensitivity to the deep, unfeigned fears of the Soviet Union in relation to Germany, and to the suspicions it had of the West. It does demand more sensitivity than Kennan had to the unbelievable sufferings endured by the Russian people during World War II—sufferings greater by far than those of any other combatant. It does demand understanding of the craving for restitution, even for revenge, by the victim. It does demand that the observer acknowledge that the primary Soviet motivation, after the war, was to make up for her losses at the expense of those who made war and inflicted such losses upon her. Kennan's early and exemplary feelings about the use of nuclear weapons, his judgments concerning the Soviet anxieties that brought on the Czech coup of 1948, the first Berlin crisis, and the Korean war, are admirable. However, they do not compensate for what he says about events in the period of 1935-1948. And when one reads again the famous *X* article of 1947, one can easily see why it could be put to the unremitting and pugnacious uses which Kennan would eventually find so mortifying.

In relation to the Soviets there is, then, a heavy moralism in Kennan's own principles, heavier in the years of active service than later, but always there. Suppose, however, we ignore it, and take his realism at face value, take it as he wants us to take it. Suppose we pretend that all his advice derived from alarm at the possibility that the American national interest would be sacrificed to an ungrateful, inhuman, and unappeasable ally. Suppose we grant Kennan that an innocent, a childish inexperience permitted the United States to entertain hopes of working with Stalin to stop Hitler; permitted the United States to lend itself to some of Stalin's schemes during World War II; permitted the United States to deceive itself, in the warmth of wartime feeling, into thinking that the Russians really could be won over by acts of trust and generosity; permitted the United States to remain blind, for a while after the war, to the real nature of Soviet ambition. Suppose, that is,

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that we grant to Kennan the periodic existence of moralism in the conduct of American foreign policy—to leave aside the other traits Kennan dislikes, the legalism and the influence of "vocal minorities." Suppose that we assume that American moralism was entirely free of manipulation by any realists who may have held power in America. Suppose we pretend that moralism, whatever its intention, is wholly devoid of any ingredient of unconscious realism.

A large question still remains. In the abstract, which is to be preferred: Kennan's realism pure, or America's incurable moralism? Couldn't a strong case be made for the latter? Notice what Kennan's realism costs. It costs the range of impulses and feelings usually included in that vague but meaningful phrase, "democratic morality." What would this country become, if its leaders and led were exclusively "realist"? It is sickening to think that all our power and energy would be spent without an accompaniment of generosity, sympathy, remorse, some measure of trust, some degree of optimism regarding the human nature of our adversaries as well as our allies. Indeed, what must this country have been like if it could determinedly set itself against Russia even before the war with Germany was over? Is such behavior to be expected from a democracy? What must this country have been like, if it did not feel "elation" at the war's end? If it did not expect the world after the war to be better than it was before? If it did not forgive Russia something for its sufferings, and make some effort—naive and awkward though it was—to come to terms with that country?

Of course these impulses and feelings can go astray; worse, they can turn into their opposites, and produce recklessness and hysteria. But if suddenly they were to be choked off, what would that indicate about the domestic life of the country? Wouldn't our democracy die from too much realism? What, besides pure power, would be left? To ask and say these things is not to be soft-minded or to overpraise our society—although it is to think more of it than Kennan is prepared to do.* We sit and worry about the war in Vietnam, and Kennan sits and worries with us. But would it be too far wrong to say that if the war is not to go on indefinitely in its hideous way, the cause will lie in American "moralism"—not in cowardice or war-weariness, and certainly not in Kennan's realism?

IRONICALLY, it is not far-fetched to say, though he may deny it, that Kennan's decency, not his realism, moves him to condemn the war. Given America's preponderant power, which is aching to be displayed; given all the interests pushing American imperialism on; given all the troubles that seem to invite their solution at the expense of the outside world, Kennan's style of realism and sense of limits do not stand a ghost of a chance of interposing a countervailing weight to the appetites and presumption of American leadership. It is excellent to rebuke American energy when it is mindless, as Kennan does when speaking of the Spanish-American War: ". . . the American people of that day, or at least many of their more influential spokesmen, simply liked the smell of empire and felt an urge to range themselves among the colonial powers of the time, to see our flag flying on distant tropical isles, to feel the thrill of foreign adventure and authority, to bask in the sunshine of recognition as one of the great imperial powers of the world." Much of that still holds. But only moral outrage can tame or defeat it. Hope—if hope is thinkable—comes from the expectation of a surge of common, humane, perhaps innocent feeling. Isn't such feeling the one potential check on the American empire? Isn't such feeling the one possible hindrance to future Vietnams?

* See, for example, the cold comments made by Kennan at a symposium, and reprinted in Raymond Aron, ed., *World Technology and Human Destiny* (Ann Arbor, 1963).

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RENEE WINEGARTEN

FRENCH CULTURE & THE JEWS

THE WATERS LOOK unruffled, the current appears to be following its customary course, the bystander is lulled by a deceptive calm; then, suddenly and dramatically, someone stirs the murky depths, bringing to the surface a host of slimy creatures, and all those things people have forgotten and do not want to remember. Such was the effect in France of General de Gaulle's breathtaking assertion at a news conference this past November that the Jews are an "elite people" that is always "sure of itself and domineering." The fact that these remarks by the General elicited strong protest from many French newspapers, as well as a charge of latent anti-Semitism from Chief Rabbi Jacob Kaplan, serves to highlight the continuing seriousness of the "Jewish question" in France. Indeed, that question has come increasingly to occupy a fairly vocal segment of the French literary community in recent years, and a glance at some of the literature it has provoked demonstrates readily that the General is not alone in the tendency to voice ill-informed or incendiary pronouncements on this vexed topic. A relevant predecessor, for example, is Roger Peyrefitte who, in his book, *Les Juifs*,* written ostensibly in the name of truth but privately, one suspects, to satisfy an insatiable craving to shock and to make trouble, sets out to tear the bandage from every half-healed wound. This is a book which, however reluctant we may be to take it seriously, cannot but lead us to reflect upon the kind of soil and climate that have nurtured it, and upon the mentality which it both derives from and serves to perpetuate.

Part satirical novel, part reportage, *Les Juifs* consists of discussions rather than scenes. The principal character, Georges Sarre, is conducting an inquiry into the Jews. Worldly-wise, urbane, a writer bearing a strong resemblance to Peyrefitte himself, Sarre as a boy figured in *Les Amitiés Particulières*, a story of homosexual friendships in a Catholic school, along with the redoubtable Jesuit Father Xavier de Trennes, who here contributes acidulous letters from Rome and Jerusalem. The disquieting lesbian Baronne de Goldschild initiates her future daughter-in-law, the aristocratic non-Jewish Osmonde de N. (whose anti-Semitic mother was Sarre's mistress), into the quaint arcana relating to female duties of bed and board; while the handsome, precocious, and devout youth, Asher, troubles Sarre's sensuality with disquisitions on "piquant" Jewish manners. All this allows Peyrefitte to imply that such droll antique customs still have general currency, and to suggest that the Jews are an erotic race, particularly prone to voyeurism.

The book's avowed intention is to undermine anti-Semitism by revealing, through a study of names, the "unknown Jews" among those who believe themselves untainted by Jewish blood. Thus, the ancestors of General de Gaulle himself are alleged to be the (Jewish) Kolbs, and so forth. The author was clearly impressed by a dictionary of Jewish names compiled by Professor Paul Lévy which appeared in 1960. But inevitably, whatever the work's declared aim, the odious impression left on the reader is not dissimilar to the emotions aroused by Céline or any other myth-making anti-Semite who finds Jews lurking behind every tree, and even wearing the triple crown.

A considerable portion of *Les Juifs* is taken up with the shocked reactions of people ill-disposed to Jews who resent Sarre's imputations about their ancestry, as well as by the comments of Jews who are highly critical of Jewish shortcomings. The amused complacency with which Peyrefitte retails such reactions and comments makes the reader extremely suspicious of the true location of the author's sympathies. The scales are therefore already heavily weighted when Sarre himself, though supposedly enlightened, turns devil's advocate in an attempt to deter Osmonde from marrying Saul de Goldschild.

The discussions in this extensive tome touch upon almost every conceivable theme related to Jews during the last fifty years and more. The malice of the book has to be seen to be believed. As more French non-Jews than French Jews were slain at the battle of Verdun in 1916, it would be

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* *The Jews*, translated by Bruce Lowery, Bobbs-Merrill, 512 pp., $7.50.

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more tactful, says Sarre, if Jews did not oppose the transfer of the remains of the hero of Verdun, Marshal Pétain, to the war cemetery of Douaumont. Moreover, he continues, such tactlessness on the part of Jews arouses anti-Semitism, as does their pursuit of Nazi war criminals, no less than their pressure to remove the stigma of deicide.

Jews are not the only ones to receive short shrift at the hands of the author of that biting satire on the Vatican, *Les Clés de Saint Pierre*. For instance, Catholic writers like Mauriac and Rops are accused of shedding crocodile tears or turning Jewish martyrdom to Christian advantage (there is just enough truth in this to stimulate the reader's basest instincts, as well as a sting in the tail, for the accusation is made by a Jewish speaker). The present Pope is said to have won the election because of his condemnation of Hochhuth's *The Deputy* while he was still Cardinal Montini. Small wonder that such obvious pleasure in scandalmongering, such frivolity and sheer impertinence, have aroused a sense of outrage on all sides.

Yet there seems no cause to doubt Peyrefitte's account of the workings of reactionary Catholic opinion unfavorable to changes in the policy of the Church toward the Jews; the accuracy of this account, after all, can be confirmed from independent sources. Nor is there any reason to question his report of anti-Jewish comments made at present-day social gatherings of members of the nobility or the literary profession. In essence, such comments differ remarkably little from those recorded by Proust, whose Duchesse de Guermantes, it will be recalled, blithely observed in connection with the supporters of the unprepossessing Dreyfus: "What a misfortune for them not to be able to change their innocent for another!"

Indeed, confirmation of a bull's eye has come from an unexpected quarter. One of Peyrefitte's victims, the lightly disguised "Jouvenceau" (or Stripling), rough-handled with his wife "Bélise," saw fit to publish a rebuttal, neatly entitled *Riposte à Roger Perfide*.* Quite the most significant aspect of this rejoinder is that the author felt the need to issue it at all: clearly, times have changed to some extent. In this pamphlet the elderly novelist Marcel Jouhandeau accuses his accuser of betraying friendship and hospitality, and of attributing to himself and his wife, Elise, the sentiments Peyrefitte holds but does not think it politic to voice. Jouhandeau then goes to the trouble of setting out the reasons which made him "temporarily" give vent to anti-Semitism at the time of the Popular Front in a diatribe on the "Jewish peril" (since withdrawn from his collected works). He had not intended the slightest ill, he now says, toward those who came to power with Léon Blum and whom he merely wished "to put in their place." His mistress and friend for many years was a certain Hungarian Jewess, and besides, he always found those who share the blood of Christ "exotic." Rather amusingly, nowhere in this egocentric apologia does Jouhandeau try to attenuate the extraordinary viciousness of the remarks attributed by Peyrefitte to his wife. This is in keeping with one of Jouhandeau's favorite themes, the misery of his existence with Elise, a former dancer converted to bigotry. The strength of her anti-Semitic views was even remarked upon by her husband in one of his prewar chronicles of their married life.

Ultimately, Peyrefitte's aim in writing *Les Juifs* seems less a desire to combat racialism than to exploit the current French vogue for Jewish subjects. Peyrefitte, who has been called an industrialist of scandal, has merely seized yet another opportunity to exercise his talent as backbiter and mischiefmaker royal. The underlying meaning of his book would appear to be that although superficially Jews may now look triumphant (a costly triumph feared and foretold by their enemies), fundamentally nothing has changed and nothing is going to change. For him, the Jewish condition will always remain a special case distinct from the human condition. It seems unlikely that Peyrefitte would have hinted at this jaundiced and minatory conclusion but for a certain set of historical, social, and cultural experiences that have molded him and other members of his class.

PEYREFITTE'S BOOK can only be fully understood as a product of those experiences, and when placed against a specifically French background that spans the centuries. For a number of the bitter issues aroused by the Revolution of 1789 were still being fought in 1940, and in some French circles they are clearly being fought to this day.

Until 1789, the Jews of France had lived virtually outside society; paradoxically, as ill luck would have it, they were emancipated during the Revolution, and were granted civic rights in 1790 and 1791. In the eyes of those who loathed the Revolution, who believed it had destroyed the nation's traditions and stability, the Jews were anathema. They were one of the most notorious groups to profit by the Revolution and to thrive and prosper in its wake. The obsession with the Rothschild family which runs like a refrain through Peyrefitte's prevaricating novel recalls surprisingly the fascinated aversion of Stendhal, who witnessed the rise of the upstart Jewish financial dynasties among the newly rich in the early 19th century.

The French right wing has traditionally disliked the Jews, both when it was Christian (Jews were regarded as eternal enemies of the true faith) and later when it was Nietzschean and anti-Christian (they were blamed for being the source of Christianity and Judaeo-Christian values, for sloppy humanitarianism and lily-livered democracy). The Dreyfus Affair, which divided the

* Dynamo, Liège, September 1965.

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country at the turn of the century, became the climax of a quarrel that had already lasted a hundred years. Even now, French intellectual life cannot be discussed without taking the Affair into account; mention of it is still made at every turn; nor should one forget that it occurred within living memory.

In his regular column in *Le Figaro Littéraire*, François Mauriac is fond of reminding his readers that he can actually remember the Affair, on occasion connecting its evil with that of the unparalleled Nazi immolation of "those dark lambs," the Jews. In her memoirs, Simone de Beauvoir (who was by reaction to take the opposite course to her family) describes her middle-class father's nationalism and admiration for Charles Maurras; how he detested aliens, was annoyed that Jews were allowed to participate in the country's affairs, and was as convinced of the guilt of Dreyfus as her mother was of the existence of God. The astounding words of Maurras at his trial in 1945—"*C'est la revanche de Dreyfus*!"— confirm how long a shadow the Affair has cast. Up to 1945, there is scarcely a writer or figure of importance in French life and letters (not least de Gaulle) who was not influenced at some stage and in some degree, either directly or indirectly, or in counter-reaction, by one or both of those nationalist masters of the French tongue, Barrès and Maurras. Their influence might be shaken off, but the mark of it indelibly remains, particularly in a certain loftiness of tone and outlook. One reason for this is that their views drew sustenance from an ancient source of heroic feeling immensely attractive to the French mind.

An atmosphere had thus been created on the French Right where some dose of anti-Semitism, although varying in degree and intensity, was regarded as normal. This atmosphere was eventually to affect everybody, opponents as well as supporters of Maurras's *Action Française*, and it has inevitably conditioned the nature of the discussion about Jews in France during the last twenty years. It explains why in some respects this discussion seems to be taking place on a level that has long been transcended in other countries, often in straightforward and irksome terms of anti-Semitism or dual loyalty, such as are to be found in Peyrefitte. The debate, moreover, remains largely dominated by the perspective of Christianity, or rather by that of the Roman Catholic Church, the radiance of whose cultural influence even upon those who are not Christians should by no means be underrated.

PRESENT-DAY writers can thus still be found caught in a vicious circle. Typical, perhaps, in this regard is Clara Malraux, whose upbringing was divided among Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism, and whose interest in Jewish matters, on her own avowal, dates from after the Second World War. The chief attraction of her artfully self-conscious autobiography* lies less in her account of childhood and youth in Germany and France than in her relations with the man she rather coyly names "my companion," her enigmatic former husband, the novelist, adventurer, and present Gaullist Minister for Cultural Affairs. She goes some way toward satisfying our curiosity about the little-known early period of Malraux's life, a period which shows traces both of Barrès's *culte du moi* and of Maurrasian authoritarianism.

In the second volume of her autobiography, *Nos vingt ans*,† Mme. Malraux tells of a quarrel with her husband that momentarily shook their happiness in the early 20's. The quarrel was over the famous attack led by the officer cadets of Saint-Cyr in World War I; insisting on their white gloves, plumes, and scarlet uniforms, the cadets had been mown down by the enemy guns. Malraux was provoked into saying that Clara could not appreciate the nobility of their gesture because of her Jewish cowardice. And she finds it necessary to declare today that he was never an anti-Semite—an otiose declaration that reveals a good deal about individual and collective attitudes and assumptions. For if there is a heavy hint of private spite and even literary jealousy in her portrait of André Malraux, an uncontrollable urge to show him in the worst possible light, it nevertheless cannot be denied that he is an ambivalent figure in a country where writers of stature are noted for their (often deliberate) equivocation.

It has only recently come to light that between 1927 and 1943 (note the date), this celebrated anti-Fascist, who was to become a commander in the resistance, was engaged in lengthy conversations with an equally well-known Fascist, the novelist Drieu La Rochelle, who committed suicide in 1945 rather than face trial for collaboration. What did they discuss as they paced the streets or sat up together long into the night? Nietzsche? Decadence? The equivalence of totalitarian movements? The tragic fate of man? The cult of risk and self-fulfilment? Whatever the subjects of their talk, one thing seems plain. The picture of the Occupation so dear to propaganda, wherein French society was divided into virtuous Resistance fighters and wicked collaborators, has to be replaced by one that is less crudely simpleminded and more remarkable for its fine shading than for its brutal contrasts between light and dark. In recent years, many works attempting to deal disinterestedly with the Occupation and the Vichy regime have been contributing to this end.

It was the experience of the Occupation, indeed, that has brought about such change as has occurred in the French climate of opinion concerning the Jews. More light has been shed on this experience during the last decade, as some of the notable men and women who lived through

* *Memoirs*, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 372 pp., $6.95.
† Grasset, Paris, 1966.

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that epoch have begun to publish their memoirs. Gradually, an awareness has grown that the Occupation was very different for those who were Jews and those who were not, and this awareness has come to color much contemporary writing on the subject.

Many French Jews awoke for the first time in those years to the potential consequences of a disregarded label which implied adherence to a culture of which they were largely ignorant. Words that had previously been shrugged off now suddenly became charged with dangerous meaning. Not for them the luxury of Malraux's chats with Drieu, or, as with Sartre, the publication and performance of their works. For many French non-Jews, on the other hand, a growing sense of guilt and complicity was to take hold at the same time as the behavior of some of their fellow countrymen was to provide them with a deepening source of pain and shame.

The fact is that even those who did not share in the deed came to feel corrupted by it. Women were particularly affected. Madame François Mauriac saw a trainload of child deportees and communicated her shocked horror to her husband, who in the early days had supported the Vichy regime of national reconstruction. He did not see it, but he remembers. One of the most influential of French women journalists, Françoise Giroud, can never forgive herself for not tearing the yellow star from a child she encountered in the métro. Violette Leduc, in her autobiography, *La Bâtarde,* remembers how she went back to sleep when she heard a Jewish neighbor being carried off in the early hours of the morning. "What luck we aren't Jews at this moment," she felt as she enjoyed some small pleasure, and the recollection has burned into her soul.

It was her experience during the Occupation which also led Simone de Beauvoir away from the liberal humanist standpoint. Before the war, she firmly believed that Jews did not exist: there were only men and women, there was only the human condition. With mounting distress, she describes in her memoirs the gradual intensification of the anti-Jewish laws, affecting first foreign and later French Jews. The blood of others—the disappearance of her friends, culminating in the deportation and death of Bourla—was to destroy what she now conceives as too facile a view. The horror of their fate became an obsession with her, "their misfortune . . . poisoned the air," to such a degree that at the Liberation, "the joy of living yielded to the shame of surviving." Doubtless it was their tragedy which made her so unrelenting an enemy of collaborators guilty of the denunciation of Jews.

What such people as these found especially hard to bear was that the actual arrest and deportation of thousands, including women and children, in one of the most shameful episodes in French history, were actions carried out not by the Nazis, but by Frenchmen. This unpalatable fact tended at first to be glossed over: for example, a commemorative plaque attributes to the Nazi occupying forces an action performed by the French themselves. Even recently, an eminent French writer of Jewish origin declared that it was the Nazis who imported racialism into France, an absurd remark when one remembers Gobineau with his opinions on racial inequality. A book published earlier this year, *La grande rafle du Vél d'Hiv,** by Claude Lévy and the late Paul Tillard, while emphasizing the notable exceptions, makes no bones about French responsibility, bringing to light the excessive zeal of Vichy in dealing with its Jews—a zeal which astonished even the Nazis.

SARTRE APPEARS to have been thinking along these lines when in May 1967 he wrote his moving preface to the symposium on the Israeli-Arab impasse, published in a special number of *Les Temps Modernes.*† In this preface he recalled with bitterness that *"la grande rafle"* (the big roundup) of 1942 was the work of the French police; that the extermination of French Jews would not have been possible without the quiet complicity of many Frenchmen; and that it was a French patriot, Laval, who personally insisted on deporting "children as well." If today Sartre finds himself allergic to any hint of anti-Semitism or any renewed threat of Jewish massacre from whatsoever quarter, it is not solely (he maintains) the result of a merely subjective reaction. On the contrary, it is "a general effect of historical and purely objective circumstances" that he and others like him are not disposed to forget.

The succession of moral stands adopted by Sartre in recent years is evidently not a mere intellectual exercise. Ultimately, it may be due less to his belief in "commitment" than to his determination at all costs to avoid the stain of complicity. Certainly, his reiteration of the theme of man as his own worst enemy (at its most telling in the passionate rhetoric of the final speech of *The Condemned of Altona*), his view that human evil is ineradicable—a form of pessimism more common on the Right than on the Left—were confirmed, if not inspired, by what he witnessed during the Occupation and immediately thereafter. The Jewish experience may have been only one element in the development of his anguished self-loathing as a member of the incriminated, canting bourgeoisie; nonetheless, its contribution should not be underestimated: it is a rabbi, after all, who serves as catalyst in *The Condemned of Altona.*

Thus, at the dark and twisted roots of much of the sympathetic interest in Jews and Jewish affairs that flourishes in France at the present time, there lies an ineluctable sense of guilt and complicity. Guilt is the impulsion behind the new curiosity;

* Robert Laffont, Paris, 1967.

† *Le conflit israélo-arabe, Les Temps Modernes,* June 1967.

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guilt the shaky foundation on which that ill-named phenomenon, philo-Semitism, rests. For some, like Sartre and Madame de Beauvoir, the sense of complicity is of long standing; for others, qualms of conscience have been developing as the result of a slow process, partly encouraged by the questioning of the younger generation. This process gained impetus in the early 60's with the accusations of Hochhuth's historically important, if mediocre, play, *The Deputy,* accusations which have stimulated such studies as that of Jacques Duquesne on the behavior of French Catholics during the Occupation; and with the controversy surrounding the Eichmann trial, whose disclosures were perhaps more readily assimilable simply because of the passage of time.

Alongside the now almost commonplace confession of culpability, however, there runs a powerful current of indifference to, and reaction against, the assumption of complicity, a reaction quite plainly expressed in Peyrefitte's book. There are those who are weary of hearing about Dachau and Auschwitz, who like to remind their readers that Frenchmen, as distinct from French Jews, also perished in the concentration camps, and who feel that Jews are always contriving to make the most of the sufferings of their co-religionists.

It is curious that roughly at the same time as the guilt complex appeared to be reaching its apogee, that is, during the last decade, there was a recrudescence in France of Fascist-inclined sentiment and atmosphere. Peyrefitte's book thrives on this antithesis; indeed, his book may even serve as its distasteful symbol. The traumatic loss of France's colonial empire; the waste in Indochina culminating in the humiliating defeat at Dien Bien Phu; the futile struggle in Algeria which, like so many aspects of French political life in modern times, tended to assume the dread shape of civil war—all these provided fertile ground for such a revival.

The Fascists themselves have seized their opportunity and continue freely to publish their views. Among them is Maurice Bardèche, brother-in-law of Robert Brasillach (the only collaborator among men of letters of any standing to be executed at the Liberation), and author of a suggestive study of Stendhal in which an attempt is made to annex that novelist to the Right. Bardèche regards the defeat of Nazi Germany as the worst catastrophe of modern times. His distaste for Jews, however, is now overshadowed by his opposition to the Third World. He and his friends are therefore graciously prepared to overlook what they call the "Jewish core" of the French and Russian Revolutions, since all white races must unite against the rest, though of course Jews will play only a modest role in this struggle.

More significant in this context, perhaps, is the renaissance of interest in Drieu La Rochelle, which has taken even his admirers by surprise. This rebirth of interest, accompanied by the reprinting of certain of Drieu's works and by a number of monographs devoted to him, appears in some respects to be less literary than moral in impetus. It is not so much because he is considered a great writer, but because some of his prophecies have come to pass and because he was at a loss in a decaying society, that people are concerned with him now. One of his admirers, who was eighteen at the time of Drieu's suicide, and was later disillusioned by military service in Algeria and by the conviction that his comrades died there for nothing, has found an answering echo in the heady nihilism of his elder. Meanwhile, naturally, not much stress is being laid today on such aberrations as Drieu's anti-Semitism or his Fascist views.

IT IS AGAINST the backcloth of this dichotomy between guilt and the rejection of guilt, complicity and indifference, the desire for understanding and the persistence of old attitudes in scarcely modified guise, that much of the recent work by French writers of Jewish origin should be seen. This is what helps partly to explain the acrid, self-pitying, plangent tone of some of these authors. The breast-beating, self-analyzing French Jewish agnostic writer is a comparatively recent phenomenon. Such writers are sensitive to hostile undercurrents; they are also ready to accuse an audience that sometimes seems to need to be accused, ready to take advantage of the existence of a new indulgent public, made up of inquiring non-Jews and of Jews who have just found an interest in their past and present situation.

This public tends to welcome almost anything that touches upon Jewish subject-matter, whether novels, autobiographies, or sociological, literary, or historical studies. Indicative of some current preoccupations is the work of a French Hispanist, Dominique Aubier, who by a series of dazzlingly ingenious if not always entirely convincing hypotheses, tries to demonstrate the connection between Don Quixote and the *Zohar.** Her sights clearly on the present, she sees this bond as betokening a desire for religious reconciliation.

Certainly, the flood of novels of varying merit on Jewish themes has not ceased, from the time when André Schwarz-Bart's *The Last of the Just* (in spite of its blatant weaknesses and clumsy language) won the Prix Goncourt in 1959, to the recent vogue of *Treblinka,*† Jean-François Steiner's controversial piece of fictional journalism. It is noteworthy that the writers who have sought to satisfy this demand for works which are specifically Jewish in character do not, for the most part, come from the old-established French Jewish families, but from more recent arrivals and their descendants. These authors are engaged in a pas-

* *Don Quichotte prophète d'Israel,* Robert Laffont, Paris, 1966.

† Translated by Helen Weaver, Simon & Schuster, 416 pp., $5.95.

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sionate search for identity, authenticity, and self-acceptance. Theoreticians to a man, they have fallen under the influence of Sartre, and to a lesser degree, of Madame de Beauvoir, both of whom have attempted to find a means of existential "liberation" from racial disabilities as well as from other forms of lack and underprivilege.

By far the most influential work on the racial problem has been Sartre's *Réflexions sur la question juive*, which has dominated the theoretical approach to racial questions for the last twenty years, leaving its trace on writers as distant as Max Frisch and James Baldwin. Little wonder, then, that all those in France who touch on such matters betray its mark, either with or without acknowledgment, and regardless of whether they accept or query its conclusions.

At this point in time it is not difficult to see how closely Sartre's essay derives from the paradoxical situation that existed in France before the war, when there were two totally separate and seemingly unrelated phenomena: on the one hand, an ironic and fashionable anti-Semitism that was eventually, by imperceptible degrees, to lead to the denial of the Jews' right to live; and on the other, the presence of people who were Jewish in little else than name. Hence the success of such epigrams as "it is the anti-Semite who creates the Jew," or "the Jew is a man whom others regard as a Jew."

But the importance of Sartre's essay lies not only in what it says, in its view of the action of the beholder upon the person beheld, but in the form it takes, in its very method. Sartre seemed to be the first to cut through the tangled undergrowth of prejudice and myth to reach the free air of apparently cool and detached definitions and generalizations. It is as a consequence of this that Sartre's vision, terminology, and method have dazzled French intellectuals. The modern French intellectual often tends to seek out some philosophical cubby-hole—existentialism; Marxism; and, now the height of fashion, the structuralism of Claude Lévi-Strauss and others—into which he can fit his needs. Robert Misrahi (a disciple of Sartre and teacher of philosophy of Turkish Jewish descent), in his extremely abstract philosophical study, *La Condition réflexive de l'homme juif*,* tries to combine Sartre and Lévi-Strauss, two thinkers who do not always see eye to eye. In the process of straining for authenticity, he tends to produce definitions that may mean something to him, but are unlikely to mean much to a reader who is not impressed by abstractions.

The dangers and limitations of a passion for definition can be seen equally vividly in Albert Memmi, a writer who seeks to erect a whole impersonal edifice on the basis of a highly individual, personal experience. Memmi is a Tunisian Jew who felt at home neither in the ghetto of Tunis, among Tunisian Moslems, nor among the French settlers to whose culture he was attracted (a situation he depicted in his semi-autobiographical novel, *Pillar of Salt*). While often acute in detailed observation, Memmi's *Portrait d'un juif*, dedicated to "Sartre, homme libre," and its recent sequel, which bears the significantly Sartrean title *La Libération du juif*,† betray a racial hypersensitivity bordering on the pathological. According to *La Libération du juif*, all the proposed solutions to the Jewish condition, which Memmi analyzes in turn, are thoroughly unsatisfactory. For an artist such as himself, the position is especially acute. The "liberation" he himself finally and optimistically proposes is plainly (like Misrahi's) a personal one. But the "disease"—the word is not too strong for Memmi's analysis—is portrayed more vividly than the cure.

YET ANOTHER incorrigible theorizer is Jean-François Steiner in his documentary novel, *Treblinka*. While the personal impetus behind this novel—the author's loss of his father and other members of his family during the Nazi terror—is evident, Steiner nonetheless feels constrained to fit the facts into some rational superstructure. Thus it is "the Jewish will to live" which leads both to what he calls the Jews' "complicity" in their own destruction and to their heroic revolt against their oppressors at Treblinka, both to the descent into hell and the ascent from it. This aesthetically pleasing arrangement, which seems so repellent where such a theme is concerned, owes something to Sartre's concept of the "series" as distinct from the "group"—as Madame de Beauvoir observes in her well-meaning but strained preface to the book. The fondness of left-wing writers, especially contributors to *Les Temps Modernes*, for finding in the Nazi extermination camps the culmination of capitalist society, and a foretaste of the technological horror to come, is shared by Steiner. Yet it appears at the very least doubtful whether the model of capitalist exploitation of workers really provides a suitable analogy for the unparalleled situation of the camps.

Steiner's principal aim, however, is to provide, through the uprising at Treblinka, a connecting link across the ages between the heroism of Masada and that of present-day Israel. The theory has its attractions, but a theory it remains nevertheless, the testimony of an urge to impose upon actual events and sufferings an explanation that somehow softens the intolerable harshness of the truth, and makes it bearable. It is not difficult to sympathize with the author's basic need to do this, nor is there much doubt that the French reader finds an agreeable echo of the heroic tradition of Malraux in the debates among Steiner's characters on suicide and on Jewish destiny and honor. Ultimately, however, Elie Wiesel's plea for a moratorium on explanations and theories would right-

* Collection *Les Temps Modernes*, Julliard, Paris, 1963.

† *The Liberation of the Jew*, translated by Judy Hyun, Orion Press, 303 pp., $4.95.

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ly embrace Steiner's book as well as innumerable others.

Even André Schwarz-Bart, whom one might have thought primarily a lyrical instinctive writer, has fallen under the spell of Madame de Beauvoir's views, formulated in *The Second Sex,* on the link between the condition and treatment of women, Jews, colored people, and colonial subjects. Here, Schwarz-Bart joins Memmi, who wrote on the colonial question before going on to grapple with the Jewish problem, and who also associates these questions with that of the subjection of women. Schwarz-Bart's latest novel, *Un plat de porc aux bananes vertes,** written in collaboration with his wife Simone who comes from Guadeloupe, is the first volume of a seven-part cycle which is intended to deal with the supposedly interrelated situation of women, colored colonial people (its protagonist-narrator is a woman from Martinique ending her days in a wretched Parisian old-age home), and Jews. For Schwarz-Bart (writing under the influence of Fanon and Sartre), the evil of European civilization in its conduct toward the infirm and underprivileged is inextricably bound up with the evil of the world of the concentration camps. He proposes to demonstrate this fully in the final volume of the cycle which will feature a character only mentioned here in passing, the surviving elder brother of the hero of *The Last of the Just.* At the moment, however, he is rather ingenuously but not unexpectedly expressing some doubts as to whether he will ever be "mature" enough to write this final volume.

A GOOD DEAL OF contemporary writing by French Jews still reads like a frustrated love affair with "assimilation." It looks almost as if, had total submersion proved possible, many of them would have disappeared joyfully without a trace. Unfortunately for them, some obstacle has always presented itself in time to prevent such a consummation.

One novel even seems to symbolize in itself this current of feeling. It is a story about identity entitled *Qui Vive,*† by Jacques Lanzmann (the novelist, not to be confused with his brother, Claude, the political controversialist, who serves on the editorial board of *Les Temps Modernes* and who is, or was, a close friend of Madame de Beauvoir). *Qui Vive* centers on a Jewish youth who manages to escape death during the Occupation, because he is uncircumcised. The chief merit of the book, doubtless based on firsthand knowledge, lies in its extremely interesting picture of the more shoddy and less publicized aspects of the Resistance bands among which the youth moves. Ironically, the boy faces execution when he is arrested after the Liberation and found in possession of some incriminating mementoes. He declares to the Jewish *maquisard* before whom he is arraigned that he is a Jew, but can answer no questions on Jewish religious practice and has no means of proving his identity. We are left to presume that the youthful narrator is shot. This awkward and melodramatic dénouement evidently holds some deep private significance for the author, since for its sake he has jeopardized the novel's authenticity.

A particularly striking example of marginality with regard to Jewish identity is that of the eminent sociologist Georges Friedmann, author of *Fin du peuple juif?*** Friedmann's works on the psychology of labor have won him an international reputation, but he is also known as one of France's leading independent Marxist thinkers. He tells us that he had never practiced Judaism, nor had the question of his origins and beliefs ever been raised, until he was dismissed from his post in 1940 under the anti-Jewish laws of the Vichy regime. He had encountered anti-Semitism on his visits to Eastern Europe before the war, but had felt no ties with the people in the ghettos. Like so many others of his political persuasion, he believed the coming Revolution would solve the Jewish problem once and for all.

In January 1941 Friedmann joined the Resistance movement, whose spirit of comradeship restored his faith in France and in his fellow citizens, and put an end to his queries about the nature of Jewish identity. *Civis gallicus sum,* was his proud cry. After the Liberation, his professional interests again drew him to other fields. Why then, he asks, did he become so personally involved in Israel when he visited the country in 1963 and 1964 with the intention of writing a sociological study?

The study in question, *Fin du peuple juif?,* is largely a straightforward, highly perceptive discussion of the problems facing Israel, but it is also a passionate and troubled inquiry into the relationship between Israelis and Jews living outside Israel, and the meaning of Jewish identity for the peripheral Jew. The very fact that the author has chosen to write it in such terms is significant in itself. The book draws its strength from Friedmann's mingled detachment and involvement, and only makes its full impact in the light of his personal background. Its central thesis (already partly outmoded under the pressure of recent events) is that as conditions have changed, the old conception of the Jewish people with a mythical character and a mystical destiny has withered away, to be replaced by the Israeli nation which serves neither as the center of that people nor as its appendage.

Together with Georges Friedmann, a number of the French Jewish writers under discussion are highly critical, if not positively hostile, toward what seems to them a fossilized religious orthodoxy, and tend (with reservations) to find in the

* Seuil, Paris, 1967

† Denoël, Paris, 1965.

** *The End of the Jewish People?,* translated by Eric Mosbacher, Doubleday, 307 pp., $5.95.

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existence of Israel either the term of their inquiry or the solution to their personal dilemmas. It is curious to observe why Israel appeals to them. For Misrahi, the Israelis are no longer "literally" Jews, and their attraction for him clearly lies in the freedom they enjoy in not having to be specifically Jewish by culture or religion. For Memmi, the very existence of Israel means that one is free at last "to cease being Jewish" in the traditional sense. Such views tell us more, perhaps, about the subconscious apprehensions and longings of their authors and about the society that has shaped them, than about the questions they are intended to answer or the problems they are supposed to resolve. In fine, French writers like these have been largely inhibited and conditioned by the tortuous situation they have inherited. For the first time in their history, some of them have been struggling with the will-o'-the-wisp of an objective, would-be "scientific" view of Jewish and human identity. They appear to imagine that such matters are capable of logical definition, that emotional reactions can and should be rationalized, and solutions not only sought but found. The passion for ordered oversimplifications and beautiful generalizations is indulged not only by Sartre and Madame de Beauvoir but by many of those who walk in their shadow. It is one of the great temptations fostered by certain French habits of thought.

QUITE THE MOST outstanding imaginative Jewish writer working in French today is Elie Wiesel, and he may be regarded as the exception that proves the rule. A Hungarian who has chosen to write in French, he shares little in common with the writers I have just been discussing. Where these writers are bound by the French experience, Wiesel transcends it. Where they are disenchanted with religious practice, he is steeped in the cryptic poetry of the Hasidic tradition which he absorbed as a boy in his Transylvanian birthplace, and his very questioning of faith is conducted within the framework of faith. Where they are always searching for theories and explanations, his work, as an expression of touching humility in the face of evil, stands as a reproach not only to the theoreticians but above all to the superficial badinage of a Peyrefitte. Wiesel warns against the danger of words, for he tends constantly toward a silence that conceals a deeper truth than language. His aesthetic consists of "vision rather than knowledge, inspiration rather than affirmation."

It would be an error to conclude that because he no longer lives in France, Wiesel was just a bird of passage, a foreigner who happened to write in French through the mere accident of finding himself in Paris after being liberated from the camps, where he had witnessed the slow death of his father and the destruction of his world. Not only is he a student of French philosophy, whose Cartesian echoes can be heard disturbingly transformed to express one of his deepest convictions, the idea of his own and of universal culpability—"I live, therefore I am guilty." He is also indebted to the French language itself, which provides him with one of his greatest assets: a Racinian resonance that is lacking in English translations of his works.

It seems quite possible that French readers may have been moved almost subconsciously by this Racinian quality, and that in some strange way Wiesel is able through it to incarnate for them an apprehension of shameful horrors as well as a hard-won sublimation. There is even a marvelous sense of poetic justice and reconciliation in his adoption and command of the French tongue, since ironically he stands for the fruitful union of two civilizations, the Jewish and the French, which Gide once conceived as permanently at variance.

To a certain extent, Wiesel, no less than his colleagues, falls into the sphere of Sartre, but unlike them he has imbibed as it were the essence of existential thought and feeling rather than its detail. Perhaps, in this regard, he owes more to Dostoevsky than to anyone else, but such followers of Dostoevsky as Camus and Malraux are among his secular masters.

Wiesel is a man pursued by the shades of his beloved dead who haunt all his books. From the awe-inspiring confession of *Night*, in which he told of his existence in the camps, to the most recent collection of stories and essays, *Le chant des morts*,* which contains some of his best work, he has depicted his journey beyond nihilism and despair, his slow return to life and acceptance of himself and his destiny as spokesman for a destroyed generation. It is impossible to read him without the intensity of involvement or excitement that he himself brings to his relationship with those personages who, while ostensibly people he meets on his journey through life, seem to represent different embodiments of his inner being. A powerful Dostoevskian image of his is that of the double, whether messenger from heaven or from hell, so that one is never quite sure if the dialogue is taking place between separate creatures or between two aspects of the same soul: his own. This sense of incertitude is one that he deliberately fosters for the purpose of shattering and enlarging the reader's spirit.

As one of Wiesel's characters perceives in a characteristic antithesis, it is not God's love of man, but man's love of God that is needful for human salvation. In his meditation on the human tragedy, Wiesel's aim is, in the best French sense, to endow experience with human meaning, his chief criterion for literature being whether it enriches the world of man. It is to be hoped that such defiant humanism as his may continue to

* To be published in May of this year as *Songs of the Dead*, translated by Stephen Donadio, Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

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find a hearing when the present drift away from humanism will be remembered only as a passing fashion.

THE RISK involved in a survey of the kind undertaken here is that the reader may be left with the erroneous impression that Jews and the Jewish question dominate the contemporary French scene. It is, to be sure, an impression encouraged at one end of the scale by Peyrefitte's book with its "unknown Jews" on every hand. And at the other end of the scale even Wiesel may contribute to it, primarily in his essays and journalism, where he tends to imply that the world revolves around this subject alone, simply because his own world does.

Yet if we try to observe the French scene from a vantage point offering a wider view, we soon realize that while sympathetic and serious consideration of the subject of the Jews, their fate and their condition, occupies a larger place than formerly, that place is naturally, as one might expect, a relatively small corner. And thus, although there is no question but that a change has occurred in the climate of opinion, we must ask ourselves what, ultimately, it amounts to. It reveals, first of all, and especially among a section of the middle-aged, a moral revulsion which may even express itself publicly in political protest against government policy. Presumably, this moral revulsion will leave its imprint on the younger generation for good or ill. There has also, for another thing, been a marked change of taste in what is regarded as acceptable or unacceptable in the written or spoken word. But that the very atmosphere of sweetness and light which has been engendered in recent years should provoke a mildly ironic reaction in certain quarters is, perhaps, only to be anticipated, above all in a land where benevolence is often sacrificed to wit.

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DONALD A. ERICKSON

The "Plain People" & American Democracy

ITS ENGINE sputtering against the cold, the school bus left the town of Oelwein, Iowa, at 7:45 A.M. on Friday, November 19, 1965. Aboard were a driver, a school nurse, and the superintendent of schools, Arthur Sensor. They were headed for the Old Order Amish settlement a few miles to the southwest, where they intended to round up some forty children and bring them to public school--against the wishes of their parents and the leaders of the Amish community. Such drastic action was deemed necessary because the "Plain People" had been violating the law by staffing their private schools with uncertified teachers.

On the way, the bus stopped momentarily in the tiny hamlet of Hazleton to pick up Owen Snively, principal of the Hazleton elementary school. Snively had been appointed temporary truant officer for the task at hand because it was his school the youngsters were to attend, and because the Amish regarded him as their friend. Indeed, in his love of the land and the outdoors, Snively had much in common with the Plain People; a homespun warmth and candor about him reflected boyhood years on an Iowa farm.

Superintendent Sensor noticed that no less than seventeen carloads of newsmen and spectators were parked near the Hazleton school, waiting for the "action" to begin. "If I'd had any sense," he was to say later, "I'd have gone back home the moment I saw those cars." For most of his thirty-eight months in office, Sensor had avoided taking any action against the Amish; not only was he genuinely fond of many of them, but he also knew that national sentiment favored the Plain People in their determination to educate their own children in their own way. Now, however, the time for a "showdown" had come.

As the bus proceeded to make the rounds of all the homes of those Amish who were disobeying the school code, the delegation of public school officials encountered various forms of resistance. One farmer, Abe Yoder, had blocked his driveway to prevent the bus from entering. At other stops, Snively would enter the house and declare that, acting under the authority of Iowa's truancy statute, he had come to take the children to the Hazleton school. But his efforts were to no avail. One father, Christ Raber, blandly reported that his offspring were "not here," even though the driver claimed he could see them peeking through a doorway; William Schmucker did not deny that his children were present, but he refused to surrender them; some parents had hidden their children in the fields, while others had already dispatched them to the Amish school. Still hoping to avoid trouble, the group moved from farm to farm, each time returning to the bus emptyhanded. Finally, after the last home had been visited, the bus drove to Amish School No. 1, also known as the "South School," where many of the pupils had already arrived. By the time classes were scheduled to begin, the sheriff and the county attorney were also on the scene, along with a number of parents of the schoolchildren.

Truant Officer Snively now entered the building and explained his mission to the pupils. Declaring that he was their friend, that he wished only to help them, and that they would receive a warm welcome at Hazleton, he asked them to be good children and file quietly into the bus behind Sheriff Fred Beier. The sheriff started slowly toward the bus, the boys and girls following in an orderly procession. Suddenly, either the teacher or one of the mothers shouted in German, "Run!" The pupils bolted for the rear of the schoolyard, scrambled through the barbed-wire fence, and ran through the adjoining cornfield into the woods beyond. Some did not stop running until they reached their homes; wisely, the officials declined to chase them. Only two children failed to escape. Emanuel Borntreger, a portly thirteen-year-old, could not keep up with his peers, and waddled confusedly into the arms of the deputy sheriff, who led the weeping youngster to the bus. And Sara Schmucker, a tiny girl of six, never got beyond the cornfield, where she shivered and screamed distractedly. Superintendent Sensor, tears streaming down his face, took her to the sheriff's heated automobile and tried to calm her.

When no other pupils could be found, the men took Sara and Emanuel back to the schoolhouse. Urging the Amish to return the children to their studies at once, they announced that no further interruptions would occur that day. On the way back to Hazleton, however, Snively suggested that "since the Hookies pulled a fast one on us, we should pull a fast one on them." (The Amish, who fasten their clothing with hooks and eyes because of their opposition to all "ornaments," are often called "Hooks" or "Hookies." Similarly, the non-Amish in the vicinity are frequently referred

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to as "Buttons.") During the noon hour, Superintendent Sensor and Sheriff Beier suddenly reappeared at Amish School No. 1, while Snively and the deputy sheriff went to Amish School No. 2 (also known as "North School" or "Charity Flats School"). Soon the bus pulled up, and the pupils were carefully loaded aboard and whisked to Hazleton. This time the operation went smoothly: no parents or newsmen were present, and the youngsters themselves did not resist.

At Hazleton, pre-appointed pupil hosts welcomed the Old Order children, escorted them to classrooms, and helped them to settle down. During the afternoon, the newcomers took part in studies, played games with their classmates, and were treated to cookies and milk. Many of the Amish youngsters seemed to view the whole affair as high adventure; at least they sang and joked all the way home. Others, however, were emotionally shaken as a result of having been forced to disobey their parents. And according to reports, a few were punished for having taken too enthusiastically to Hazleton Elementary School.

SUCH, THEN, were the events of Friday, November 19—a prelude to the greater "showdown" of the following Monday. Assuming that the authorities would again call first at South School, the Amish posted most of their leaders there, along with William Sindlinger, their attorney. Instead, the entourage of officials headed for the North School, but the Amish were not caught completely off guard. A large, horse-drawn wagon blocked the driveway, and near it stood Sindlinger's colleague, Wallace Read. Reading aloud from a legal document, he made it known that anyone except Truant Officer Snively entering those private grounds would be liable for trespass. Snively retorted that he was entitled to bring assistants, and Sheriff Beier, stating that he was responsible for upholding law in Buchanan County, proceeded to move the wagon, thus permitting the bus to enter the school grounds.

A group of stern-faced fathers stood outside the school, guarding the door. Snively, followed by Beier, pushed his way past the men (the Amish are pacifists) into the anteroom full of weeping mothers who pulled at his clothing and begged him to desist. He brushed the women aside and stepped into the schoolroom proper. At that moment, the pupils began—half-hysterically—singing chorus after chorus of "Jesus Loves Me," led by a teacher who circled the room in agitation. Utter bedlam ensued as mothers rushed in to embrace their children protectively, fathers entered to vent their anger on the officials, Snively attempted to pry a screaming schoolboy loose from a desk, and County Attorney Lemon shouted his disgust at the way the Amish were behaving. So great was the turmoil that the authorities realized it would be impossible to effect a peaceful transfer of the children to public school. They retreated outdoors, and later that same morning Superintendent Sensor, Sheriff Beier, and County Attorney Lemon flew to Des Moines, the state capital, for assistance. Visibly upset, they left behind them an Old Order community in a state of shock; some of the children could not be quieted all day.

News of the showdown spread quickly. A number of reporters and photographers had been present on Friday and Monday, so that the whole nation was made privy to what had happened. Faced with a scandal, the citizens of the area rushed to the defense of their representatives. The Oelwein *Daily Register* joined the town's Rotary Club and Chamber of Commerce in expressing strong support for the local officials; the Iowa State Education Association and the Iowa Association of School Administrators applauded the "firm position" that had been taken. But the country as a whole plainly did not share this sentiment. Hostile phone calls, telegrams, and mail poured into Oelwein from all parts of the continent, and the nation's news media lost no opportunity to offer blistering critiques of Sensor, Snively, and their colleagues. In Cedar Rapids, some eighty miles away, Station WMT-TV, which had previously supported Oelwein's leaders, now condemned them for what it called "legalized kidnapping":

> Force had been used on the Amish before, but always on the Amish parents who were guilty of violating the law. Now, force has been used against the Amish children, who are guilty of nothing. They have done their parents' bidding as good children do; and as a reward, they have been frightened, manhandled, and forced to violate their religious convictions. . . . Mr. Lemon and school officials have acted most unwisely. Their ultimate weapon has turned public opinion sharply against them, as ultimate weapons always do. . . . Whatever the final outcome of this distasteful controversy, we urgently suggest that any future prosecution of the Amish be directed only against the guilty. Leave the innocent children alone.

The showdown of November 1965 was obviously harmful to the children of the Amish, damaging to Iowa's public image, and destructive of all trust between the Plain People and the local authorities. How can one explain such hostilities between a gentle farming folk and a group of public officials who apparently acted with the best of intentions?

II

IT SHOULD, of course, be admitted at the outset that the Amish are the object of a certain amount of resentment wherever they live. So "strange" are their ways, and so intransigent is their nonconformity, that their very presence seems to constitute a kind of insult to the larger society. Because they generally prefer to have only limited contact with the "Buttons," they

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are bound to strike the latter as cliquish and unfriendly. Their pacifism is often construed as cowardice, and the fact that many of them were conscientious objectors during World War II meant that disproportionate numbers of their neighbors were called up to serve—at least in those areas, like Oelwein and its vicinity, where a county-by-county quota system was in force. Then, too, the Amish do not reinvest their earnings in the local economy; they are forbidden to purchase or possess radios, television sets, automobiles, plumbing, washing machines, refrigerators, sofas, sports equipment, or "fancy" clothing. At the same time, they are not above borrowing their neighbors' cars or using their telephones on occasion.

Nevertheless, in many areas of the country the "Hooks" live in harmony with the "Buttons." Indeed, the latter often admire the Amish, for they are skillful farmers, industrious and self-reliant, and are known to "take care of their own." The ways of the Amish are therefore not sufficient by themselves to account for the "showdown" of November 1965 in Iowa. To understand that confrontation, one has to go back a few years in the history of Oelwein and Hazleton to a particularly rancorous issue of local politics in which the Amish inadvertently became involved.

Before the fall of 1961, the Hazleton and Oelwein public schools were located in separate districts. For years it had been suggested that these two districts merge and all high school students be educated in Oelwein, Hazleton High being too small to offer an adequate curriculum. In Oelwein, sentiments were strong for this reorganization, for the town stood to gain a good deal by it: the school district would be enlarged, the high-school program broadened, and the tax base for local education improved. Hazleton, however, was divided on the issue. The proposed merger was supported by those who thought it would improve the quality of education, and especially by those who wanted their children to have the best possible preparation for college. Indeed, a few Hazleton families had been sending their youngsters to Oelwein High all the while, though it meant paying tuition and providing their own transportation. But many Hazletonians remembered years of rivalry between the two towns and feared that the loss of a high school would seriously weaken their community. In their eyes, the merger of school districts would amount to a takeover of Hazleton by Oelwein, which for years had been threatening to eclipse its tiny neighbor.

The Hazleton school board was unanimous in its opposition to reorganization, and it refused to put the matter before the voters. Those Hazletonians who desired the merger thereupon formed a committee and—abetted by Oelwein school officials—successfully petitioned for a referendum, which was scheduled for November 8, 1961. Issues of school-district reorganization are often severely contested in rural America, but they do not usually lead to the kind of bitterness that now enveloped Hazleton. Old friends stopped talking to each other; secret meetings took place; vicious rumors were spread; and each faction continually accused the other of bad faith.

As for the Amish, they wanted to have nothing to do with Oelwein. In fact, they petitioned the county authorities responsible for drawing the boundaries of the proposed new district, asking that in the event of a merger they be excluded from the jurisdiction of the Oelwein officials. They proposed instead that their two Hazleton schools be attached to the adjoining Fairbanks Township area, being well aware that Fairbanks still maintained one-room public schools for the Amish. Oelwein officials were instrumental in having this request denied, for they coveted the resources of farmers who paid for their children's private education but whose land was nevertheless assessable for public school taxes.

At this time, A. A. Kaskadden was still superintendent of the Oelwein public schools. Those who knew him describe "Kas" as brilliant, hardworking, and expert in virtually every aspect of school affairs, but also as nervous, anxious, and a chronic worrier. He was especially distraught over the prospect of the reorganization referendum. Oelwein would undoubtedly support the merger overwhelmingly, but the approval of the voters in both districts was required. Kaskadden thought that Hazletonians would split fifty-fifty on the issue, and that the Amish, perturbed because they were not permitted to stay out of the proposed new district, would sabotage his efforts by voting against reorganization.

In September 1961, therefore, Kaskadden contacted Paul Johnston, State Superintendent of Public Instruction, and asked for his help in putting the referendum across. Johnston was known as "an apostle of school district reorganization," and had already attempted to influence Hazleton voters by announcing that state approval of their high school would be withdrawn after July 1, 1962, the date on which the merger was to take effect. He now suggested that Kaskadden win the vote of the Amish by promising to revert to the practice of maintaining simple one-room public schools in Amish communities. Hazleton's two Amish schools had once been public, and now, according to Johnston, the new board could reincorporate them into the public school system by leasing the buildings for a nominal fee, providing two certified teachers at public expense, and adapting the curriculum to the convictions of the Amish leaders. The fiscal advantages for the Plain People would be considerable, and they would lose practically nothing in the process.

Kaskadden was intrigued by this plan but also wary, for he knew that Johnston had fought for the elimination of one-room schools in Iowa. "If we are caught maintaining one-room schools

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for the Amish," he asked, "what will happen to our state approval?" Johnston replied that the State Department of Education, knowing the particulars of the situation, would raise no embarrassing questions. Kaskadden predicted that the Amish would vote for reorganization if such a compact were arranged, but he insisted that Johnston sanction the strategy in writing, promising that the status of the Oelwein schools would not be jeopardized. Back in Oelwein, he confided to his board members, "Johnston will never write that letter." A few days later, however, he did receive the communication he had requested. Johnston's letter included the following statement:

> . . . As I suggested when we were visiting, I would recommend that if the reorganization took place the Board hire teachers and provide supervision for the two schools which the Amish people are now operating. I think the new Board should provide good facilities and equipment, and good teachers for these schools but in so doing recognize these people's feeling concerning education.
>
> I think this would be a good solution for these people and also I think your board and the future board should undertake to understand their beliefs and work with them in giving their children the basic education that they firmly believe in. We would, I am sure, raise no questions concerning this arrangement so long as the facilities were adequate and well-qualified teachers furnished to teach these children along with the type of instruction materials that I am sure your Board would insist upon providing. We would not adversely judge your school because of this as we do have an understanding of the situation. . . .

Kaskadden lost no time in taking this letter to the venerable chairman of the Amish School Committee, Dan Borntreger (whose nephew, the portly Emanuel, was later to become one of the "victims" of the "showdown"). With his aquiline profile, white beard, and silky, white hair encircling a bald pate, Borntreger resembles nothing so much as a biblical patriarch. Though gentle, he is also renowned for his shrewdness. He was not easily persuaded that "Kas" and the board could make a lasting covenant, for he knew they had no legal authority to bind the new board that would be elected after reorganization. "I expect to be superintendent for many years to come," Kaskadden assured him, "and I will always recommend that the board honor our arrangement." At least one other board member also talked with Borntreger and promised—after stating that he had every anticipation of being re-elected—to keep faith. Finally, Borntreger was convinced and set about persuading his confreres to vote for reorganization.

On November 8, 1961, citizens in the Oelwein school district approved the merger overwhelmingly by a vote of 993 to 231. In Hazleton, however, the vote was much closer; 264 were for reorganization while 215 were opposed. It was obvious that the forty-four Amishmen who voted in the Hazleton district had cast the decisive ballots. The strategy of Dan Borntreger and the Oelwein school officials had worked, but they had not bargained for the reaction that was to follow. Those Hazletonians who had opposed reorganization were furious about the behind-the-scenes compact and the role of the Amish in the referendum. Their resentment was exacerbated when, in March 1962, not one member of the old Hazleton board was elected to represent the new district, while Buck Kjar, who headed the despised Hazleton reorganization committee, was placed in office along with all five members of the old Oelwein board. The disgruntled Hazletonians now vowed to take stern steps against any "Hook" caught breaking the law. They exerted intense pressure to prevent the new school board from taking over the two Old Order schools in accordance with the agreement, and they were determined to keep a close watch on "whether Oelwein will make the Amish obey the school code the way Hazleton always did."

ANCIENT GRIEVANCES against the Amish were revived, and many of them persist even today; the Plain People around Hazelton have been made subject to a dismal list of charges which are often exaggerated, unsupported, and inconsistent. Some Legionnaires, for instance, have impugned their patriotism on the basis of a juvenile prank in Amish School No. 1 that left an American flag lying on the floor; a second such incident concerned the discovery of some old civics workbooks containing doodlings in the margins which were interpreted as "disrespectful." A few Hazletonians who lost sons in World War II act as if the Plain People, with their pacifism, were entirely to blame. When the Amish cite religious principles as the basis for one or another of their decisions, they are accused of "using religion as an excuse for anything they want to do." When they say that their community needs isolation in order to survive and that their children should therefore be restricted to a limited education in rural schools, they are branded as hypocrites who are motivated by economic greed and want to exploit child labor in the fields. When, as occasionally happens, a young Amishman is discovered hiding a transistor radio under his broad-brimmed hat or in the seat of his buggy, some citizens are quick to declare that the Old Order "makes people deceitful."

In Hazleton, almost all the neighbors of the Amish declare that the latter are happy and carefree—"perhaps happier than we are." Yet some of these same people are capable of describing the Amish community as if it were a concentration camp where children are chained to beds, where barefoot women run farms while their husbands loaf, where the young are "worked to death" and aging wives are allowed to die in childbirth as a

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substitute for divorce. Hazletonians can identify only about fifteen Amishmen, out of a community of at least five hundred, who have left the fold in recent decades, yet they argue that the young are deserting in such alarming numbers that the Old Order will soon disintegrate. Defectors from the Amish community are depicted as "getting along beautifully"—but the Amish education system is condemned as cutting off all chances of survival in the outside world. Old Order adolescents are pitied for their drab, ironclad lives, yet their purported barnyard orgies are discussed with evangelical indignation—"They aren't as righteous as they claim to be!"

Such, then, was the nature of the antagonism against the Amish that flourished in the wake of the 1961 referendum. It was an animosity that could scarcely be ignored in Oelwein, where school leaders were especially sensitive to voter opinion at the time, for a bond issue referendum to finance an urgently needed high school addition had recently been defeated. Now that Hazleton youths would be bussed to Oelwein, the shortage of space was more critical than ever. Hazletonians had been alienated enough through reorganization; now it seemed that the second bond election would fail if the school board further angered local people by complying with the compact with the Amish. What was Superintendent Kaskadden to do?

III

In a communication of May 7, 1962, the Oelwein school board announced two considerations that would guide its actions if and when it took over the two Amish schools. First, there could be little or no tailoring of the academic program to suit the religious convictions of the parents—this despite State Superintendent Johnston's now-famous letter and in spite of Kaskadden's repeated assurances to Dan Borntreger. Second, the arrangement must be *temporary*. "It would appear obvious," the board declared, "that Mr. Johnston's letter advising us to work with the Amish people in these schools . . . [was intended] to make the transition of these [Amish] pupils to a public school setup easier. Realistically, and in all honesty and fairness, it should be pointed out that the ultimate state requirement will demand that these pupils will be incorporated into the school at Hazleton where we have a reasonable chance to have at least one teacher for each elementary grade."

The Amish claimed, and several Oelwein school board members conceded, that these conditions had not been mentioned prior to the reorganization referendum of November 1961. To be sure, an edition of the Oelwein *Daily Register* that appeared four days before the voting (and carried Johnston's letter) included a statement by the Oelwein board that "Should . . . the newly elected board . . . again take over the operation of the rural schools in the Amish area, the same curriculum, the same standards, and the same quality of teachers would be used as in all other schools of the district." But the Amish paid no attention to this statement, for no such idea had been brought up in their several conversations with Kaskadden and his colleagues. It was easy to assume that this isolated utterance was nothing but a public-relations ploy intended to pacify a few citizens who were complaining about the understanding reached with the Plain People. So there was good reason for the Amish to interpret the sudden introduction of two far-reaching provisions as a deliberate attempt to back out of the compact.

The second blow against the Amish fell just one week later, on May 14, 1961. In response to inquiries from Kaskadden, State Superintendent Johnston sent two of his regional consultants to Oelwein, ostensibly to advise the school board and the Amish concerning the specific improvements that would have to be made in Hazleton's Old Order schools before they could be taken over as public schools. The consultants, Melvin Anderson and Thomas Green, inspected the two buildings, along with Kaskadden and several board members.

In keeping with the Plain People's philosophy, their schools are rustic, not to say primitive, and reflect little attention to aesthetics. The two buildings near Hazleton are reasonably clean and cheerful, though finished rather roughly and marred in spots by flaking paint. Each is furnished with two outdoor privies, a coal shed, and a well with a manual pump. The North School boasts two seesaws, two swings, and some old tires as playground equipment; the South School has none at all.

In each school the only entrance to the single classroom is through a small vestibule, in which there are shelves and nails for lunch buckets and coats. Each classroom has rough board floors; extra-tall windows on two sides for ventilation and light (there is no electricity); short shelves holding a collection of dog-eared books; a kitchen sink with water crock and paper towel dispenser; a large Regulator clock clucking high on the wall; bits of blackboard; five rows of ancient desks; a teacher's desk and chair; two or three sturdy worktables; cardboard boxes full of discarded textbooks; and some roll-up maps that are probably priceless antiques. In the rear of the room, there is a massive stove, which is kept stoked by boys assigned to the task. Pupils' drawings, virtually all of brightly colored rural scenes, are tacked on the walls.

Upon examining the premises, the members of the inspection team professed to be shocked. They had never imagined, they said, that conditions were so bad and so utterly degrading. One man protested the presence of a bird's nest on an exterior window sill. Others worried about mud puddles near the well, the unavailability of supplementary reading materials, and the fact that several of the texts and workbooks were badly out-

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dated. In a meeting that night with the Oelwein board and two representatives of the Amish community, consultants Anderson and Green nullified the recommendations contained in Johnston's widely publicized letter—without so much as contacting Johnston. The Amish schools were impossible, they announced, and could never be brought up to acceptable standards. The State Department of Education would permit the Oelwein Board to operate these schools *for the first six grades only and for two years at the very most.* Furthermore, even this ruling would not go into effect unless the Amish agreed to send all seventh- and eighth-grade pupils to Hazleton at once.

This dramatic reversal of policy by the state department of education becomes all the more puzzling when one compares it to the policy obtaining less than twenty miles away. At the time of Anderson and Green's ruling, public school districts just west of Hazleton were operating seven one-room schools and one two-room school for Amish pupils, and indeed they still do today. Department of education consultants have made regular visits to these districts, but the schools have never been condemned, although (at least as of March 1967) all eight lack plumbing, all are served by wells similar to those at Hazleton's Amish schools, and two have no electricity. About a year ago, a consultant for the education department visited five of these schools (including the two without electricity) and expressed his delight at the way the district was providing for the education of the Amish. It is clear, then, that by pronouncing North and South Schools "impossible," Anderson and Green were applying a double standard; what was permitted in other parts of northeastern Iowa was henceforth to be forbidden in Hazleton.

Why this double standard? Perhaps the department of education innocently blundered into inconsistency, as every large bureaucracy does occasionally. The inconsistency, however, came at the very time when Superintendent Kaskadden needed an excuse to abandon his covenant with the Amish. As a longstanding friend of "Kas," State Superintendent Johnston had previously invented a maneuver that helped guarantee passage of the reorganization referendum; perhaps he was now taking Kaskadden off another hook. Perhaps Anderson and Green came to Oelwein with orders to be "shocked" and to reverse the terms set forth in Johnston's letter. This theory cannot be proved, but it does fit the facts of the case.

BE THAT as it may, the action against the Amish had been escalated, and a counter-escalation was soon to come. In September 1962, a few months after the new ruling by Green and Anderson, both of Hazleton's Amish schools reopened with Old Order teachers who were equipped with no more than an eighth-grade education (the Amish generally do not believe in instruction beyond that level). For the first time in the history of Hazleton, the Plain People refused to employ certified instructors, and they have steadfastly refused to do so ever since, defending their action as one motivated by religious principles. Local citizens retorted by asking whether these principles were so changeable that they suddenly forbade the employment of state-approved tutors after having permitted it for fifteen years. And, indeed, it is difficult to determine exactly why the Amish suddenly refused to comply with the Iowa law they had obeyed for so long a time. It appears that their leaders had never been happy with the certified teachers they imported from the outside. They had to pay a premium to get legally recognized instructors and even then they usually obtained only poorly qualified individuals, for those who could find positions elsewhere were usually unwilling to work in such primitive schools. Apparently several of these "schoolmarms" lacked initiative, communicated poorly with the pupils, failed to maintain proper discipline, and reacted defensively to suggestions from parents and community leaders. It is also probably true, as the Plain People argue, that many bright young Amish girls, available at far less cost, could have functioned at a higher level.

Disillusionment was almost certainly involved in the new action by the Amish. They had apparently been complying with a law that did not make sense to them because they trusted the area's public officials and had particular respect for Kaskadden. But now they felt they had been betrayed. It may even be that the religious convictions of the Amish School Committee members underwent a genuine change, at least with regard to the question of certified teachers, when a traumatic series of events forced them to re-examine the relationship between God and Caesar. Or it may be that Dan Borntreger lost face when his compact with public officers turned out to be worthless, and he thus had to take some kind of dramatic counteraction in order to re-establish his influence.

But whatever their reasons for suddenly refusing to comply with the law, the Amish thereby played into the hands of their antagonists. Previously, hostile Hazletonians had lacked a legal reason for demanding action against the Plain People. The Amish had, to be sure, bypassed several requirements of the school code, but ordinary citizens had no right to inspect private schools, so most shortcomings went unnoticed. Whenever violations did become apparent, as when buildings went unpainted or vacations began too early, some Hazletonians would complain, some public officials would issue threats, and the faults would be rectified. But in permanently renouncing state-approved instructors in the fall of 1962, the Amish gave their angry neighbors the clear-cut instance of lawbreaking they had long been seeking. There was an immediate and vehement demand that the Amish be prosecuted.

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At first, local leaders avoided involvement in the mounting pressure for action against the Amish. They had, indeed, a ready-made excuse, for it was not clear *who* should instigate legal proceedings. The reorganized Oelwein Community School District, which was responsible for enforcing the compulsory attendance law, included parts of Fayette and Buchanan counties. Since the district headquarters were in Fayette County, the attorney for that county handled most of the school board's litigation; but Hazleton's two Amish schools happened to be in Buchanan County. Each county attorney therefore argued that the other was responsible for taking legal action against the defiant parents. Finally, someone thought of requesting a ruling from Des Moines, whereupon the Buchanan County Attorney, William O'Connell, was identified as the proper person to act as prosecutor. O'Connell, however, insisted that he could do nothing until a school officer filed a complaint against the Amish. Under fire from citizens who wanted immediate action, he protested that the Oelwein school board members were to blame for the delay because they didn't "have guts enough" to do their duty. The school board members in turn put the blame on the county school superintendent, reasoning rather strangely that while the law merely *permitted* local school boards to prosecute in such cases, it *required* the county superintendent to do so. Oelwein leaders also insisted that they could do nothing until *state* agencies took the first step, while state leaders declared that the controversy was purely local in character and therefore a matter for local people to handle.

Naturally enough, during this period the Oelwein school board met frequently and lengthily to deal with the Amish problem, thus adding further to the burdens of Superintendent Kaskadden, who was already weighed down by other problems of reorganization. On the morning of September 25, 1962, Kaskadden complained of dizziness and exhaustion to Bruce Girton, the school board president. That evening, after puttering a bit about the basement of his home, he came upstairs, slumped into a chair, and died. At an emergency board meeting the next morning, Arthur Sensor was made acting superintendent.

After Kaskadden's death, intransigence increased on both sides. The Amish were now less hopeful than ever of reaching an equitable settlement with the authorities, for "Kas" had been one of the few school officers they admired and respected. (Even today, they tend to connect their troubles with Kaskadden's death, preferring to ignore the fact that the school board had changed its tune while "Kas" was still at the helm.) The Oelwein board in turn began to deny that there had ever been a behind-the-scenes arrangement with the Amish. As the *Daily Register* of November 30, 1962 reported, school board president Bruce Girton "emphatically denied that any deal had been made with the Amish and said there had absolutely been no doublecross in the situation." Several people thought it a conclusive argument to point out that before the reorganized Oelwein district was formed, no one had had the authority to make a legally binding covenant in behalf of the district. What this argument overlooked was that no one had ever pretended that the compact was *legally* binding; it was an informal understanding that the public officials had promised to honor. The Amish, accustomed to lending money to each other over a handclasp, had simply relied on the personal integrity of these officials. According to some observers, the Oelwein board's reluctance to prosecute the Plain People was partly attributable to embarrassment about the weakness of its own case and about the fact that the Amish kept referring to the shattered covenant.

In any event, the first legal action was instigated not by the Oelwein board but by J.J. Jorgensen, Buchanan County Superintendent of Schools, who yielded to local pressures. On November 24, 1962, acting on information filed by Jorgensen, Buchanan County Attorney William O'Connell prosecuted ten Amishmen before a justice of the peace for failing to send their children to schools which had certified teachers. All ten were fined. Eight refused to pay on religious grounds and served three days behind bars, whereupon newspapers published pictures of black-bonneted Amish mothers on their way to visit their husbands in jail, and local officials were deluged with insulting letters. O'Connell proceeded to seek an injunction to close the Old Order schools, but the district court pointed out, somewhat tartly, that there was no statutory basis for such action. Soon there was talk that O'Connell was "bungling the Amish affair," and he was trounced in the subsequent Republican primary. From these events, other officials drew the conclusion that to act against the Amish was "political suicide"; the whole controversy was "one of those affairs that tars everyone with the same brush."

Further delays ensued. In January 1963, the Oelwein board offered once more to run the two Amish schools temporarily if the Plain People would agree to send all seventh- and eighth-grade students to Hazleton at once and all other pupils within two years. The proposal, no different from previous ones, was rejected. In October 1963, William Sindlinger, attorney for the Amish, sought unsuccessfully in district court to have his clients exempted from the law demanding certified teachers. In September 1964, another compromise was attempted. At the suggestion of State Superintendent Paul Johnston, the Oelwein board offered to provide special ungraded classrooms for Amish children in the Hazleton school on a one-year trial basis. The Amish would not concur. Later, officials proposed that the Plain People hire a

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certified Amish teacher (a virtually unheard-of species) from Kalona, Iowa. The Amish School Committe interviewed the teacher and announced that he was "not our kind of Amishman." If forced to accept a certified instructor, Borntreger said, his group would prefer a total outsider.

THE TURNING-POINT in the long series of delaying actions came in September 1965, when four new members were elected to the seven-man Oelwein school board. The Amish affair had been an important issue in the election. In reaction to adverse national publicity, sentiments in Oelwein had become more antagonistic toward the Amish, and the new members of the board had implied that if they were elected they would deal more firmly with the Plain People than had their predecessors. Then, too, Buchanan County had a new attorney, Harlan Lemon, who during his election campaign had repeatedly promised "to enforce all laws," and who now urged the Oelwein board to take action against the Amish immediately. Almost simultaneously, a former leader of the Hazleton faction opposed to district reorganization announced that he would ask a court to remove Sensor from office for failing to make the Amish obey the school code. In the words of Sensor, "We didn't give him a chance to act. We acted first." Oelwein officials filed charges against the offending Old Order parents in the court of Hazleton's Justice of the Peace, Minnie Wengert.

The proceedings, conducted by Mrs. Wengert on her renovated front porch, were not without charm. For more than three weeks, fourteen bearded Amishmen showed up each night, Monday through Friday, beaming good will and bearing gifts of garden produce for Mrs. Wengert, the sheriff, and other officials. As if to provide a little variety, Amishman Adin Yutzey stayed home from time to time and had to be fetched by the sheriff. It soon became the custom to arrive early and stay late, for Mrs. Wengert would pour coffee and the antagonists would munch and visit. (Sometimes, however, a certain bitterness was detectable beneath the outward amity.) At 7:30 each evening, officials testified that the Amish had once more refused to obey the law; the Amish acknowledged that the charge was true; each defendant was fined $20 plus $4 costs; and each refused to pay on religious grounds. Occasionally Dan Borntreger showed up, though he was not a defendant, to administer a lecture from Scripture, and Mrs. Wengert retorted with some well-chosen Bible quotations of her own. And so the time passed. It was announced that fines and costs would be exacted at the end of each school day, indefinitely, until the Plain People complied with the Iowa code. Furthermore, Amish properties would soon be seized and sold to pay the levies.

As the weeks wore on, County Attorney Lemon became increasingly worried. The nightly sessions were robbing important leaders of an unconscionable amount of energy and time, and the Amish showed no sign of relenting. It would not take long at this rate to ruin the Amish community financially, and the political consequences of that eventuality were unthinkable. A clever young man with a lean and hungry look, Lemon did not wish to be accused, as his predecessor had been, of botching the Amish issue. He sought not punishment but compliance. Lemon, therefore, began to explore ways of ending the impasse, holding a number of private discussions with Superintendent Sensor and two or three Amishmen who secretly disagreed with the Amish School Committee and Dan Borntreger. Finally, the behind-the-scenes negotiators agreed that everyone would save face if the Old Order pupils were escorted to Hazleton in accordance with Iowa's truancy statute. Since the Amish do not resort to violent resistance, Borntreger could claim that he had not modified his convictions, but had been overcome by force. Those Amishmen who disagreed with Borntreger would have their way without causing a serious schism in their community. And the public officials would succeed in enforcing the law without having to drive the Amish into bankruptcy or jail.

A plan was mapped out. Working secretly, the two or three Plain People who opposed Borntreger undertook to prepare their brethren for the coming events. Early one morning, public school busses would quietly arrive at the Old Order schools. Amish leaders would remonstrate appropriately—for the record. The children would be taken to the public school in spite of these protests. After a few days a pattern of compliance would be set and the trouble would all be over.

On Thursday evening, November 18, 1965, Lemon announced in Minnie Wengert's court that the plan would take effect the following morning. He requested that the Amishmen explain the situation to the children so that there would be no undue excitement. The fathers who were present neither assented nor protested; the Amish often refuse to respond to a new proposal until they have had a chance to confer with their leaders. The showdown began the next day.

V

ON November 22, 1965, a few hours after the showdown at the Amish schoolhouse, Superintendent Sensor, Sheriff Beier, and County Attorney Lemon arrived in Des Moines. Later that afternoon, they conferred with Governor Hughes, who called for and obtained a moratorium of at least three weeks so that he could explore the possibilities of a solution to the Amish problem. During the period of the moratorium there were to be no further attempts to take the Amish children to Hazleton, and the prosecution of their parents was to cease.

Shortly thereafter, Buchanan County officials announced that grain and livestock belonging to

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nine Amish farmers would be auctioned to pay the fines and court costs that had been levied before the moratorium began. Amid an outcry that the Amish had again been betrayed, the governor observed that, though the action of the county leaders was unfortunate and would "not create any good will," technically the truce had not been violated. At the last moment, an anonymous donor in Des Moines came forward with $1,511, and the sale was canceled (some people believe the governor himself raised this money). In January 1966, two businessmen from Independence, Iowa, eleven miles south of Hazleton, donated $282 to prevent another auction. A few days later, 980 bushels of Amish corn were sold to pay fines and court costs, and further auctions were threatened. But before long, Hughes remitted more than $8,000 that the Amish still owed the state, with local leaders complaining that, "The governor made asses of us. We went to court every night for all those weeks, and nothing ever came of it."

On January 10, 1966, Governor Hughes arrived at Oelwein to confer personally, and separately, with the Oelwein school board and the Amish leaders. Three state patrol cars and two dozen newsmen were at the airport when his Piper Aztec touched down, and a long procession trailed behind as he sped down the dusty roads to Dan Borntreger's house. Several Amishmen drove up in buggies to attend the meeting, some came on foot, and a few were dropped off from automobiles driven by their neighbors. The conference lasted for nearly two hours, while the blankets on the horses flapped in the breeze, the windmill creaked, and sheep and pigs meandered in the fields. Finally the governor emerged and drove to Amish School No. 1, half a mile to the west. There he was photographed talking to Amishman Andy Kaufman while the American flag flew upside down nearby. (No insult was intended; the Amish had simply been careless.) In the afternoon, Governor Hughes spoke briefly to students in Oelwein's junior high school auditorium, remarking that "we must respect the right of others to live differently. . . if it is an honest and decent way of life." Then he met for two hours with the Oelwein board around the table in Sensor's office.

On that day, the Amish agreed to lease their schools to the public school district for a nominal sum; the Oelwein school board promised to supply certified teachers to the two schools for the rest of 1965-66 and during 1966-67; and—since the board refused to pay the salaries of the two teachers—the governor promised to find funds for this purpose elsewhere. In a signed statement, the school board went on record that "adjustments will be made in the curriculum offered and in the teaching aids and methods used in these two schools, consistent with Iowa law, to avoid conflict with Amish religious beliefs." In turn, the Amish promised that during this period of public maintenance no religion would be taught.

In search of the needed money, Governor Hughes contacted Francis Keppel, then U.S. Commissioner of Education, to see whether federal funds could be made available. Keppel pointed out that the church-state overtones of the Amish problem made it too sensitive for Washington to handle and suggested that the Danforth Foundation of St. Louis might help. On February 22, 1966, Danforth consented to provide the needed $15,000 and the agreement was publicized. The governor said he would ask the 1967 session of the Iowa Legislature to create a fund for school boards that wished to make special schools available to minorities like the Amish.

During the rest of the 1965-66 school year, certified teachers were in charge of instruction in the two schools, with the previous Amish instructors acting as assistants. This arrangement led to difficulty, for the Old Order assistants sometimes contradicted statements made by the teachers. During 1966-67, however, the Amish permitted the certified teachers to proceed alone, and few problems arose. To avoid trouble, the public school authorities did not introduce science into the curriculum of the two schools.

Subsequently, the Iowa legislature, under the influence of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, associations of public schoolmen, and other conservative elements, refused to create the special fund requested by Governor Hughes, and was unwilling, for a time, to entertain any accommodations to the Amish. Seeking to circumvent these influences, the governor set up a committee of prominent citizens who, armed with new arguments and evidence provided by interested scholars, worked with key lawmakers to secure passage of a bill authorizing exemption of religious groups from the "Educational Standards Law." The exemptions are granted for two-year periods only, at the discretion of a state superintendent who has shown little aversion to the treatment the Amish have been accorded in the past. But so long as national outrage seems certain to be expressed if there is further heavy-handedness with the Plain People, the truce in Hazleton may continue. In the meantime, the Supreme Court has refused to review the Garber case, involving Amish schooling in Yoder, Kansas, and the issues will be debated in many states for years to come.

It is too soon, then, to speak of a permanent solution to the problem. But no matter what the outcome, it is impossible not to conclude that in Oelwein and Hazleton the action against the Amish was prompted not by that concern for the welfare of children one has a right to expect of school officials, but by a bitter antagonism toward the Plain People. What is more, it is clear that in this situation the Iowa school code—however it was intended—provided a means for the persecution of an unpopular minority, and for harnessing public power to the wagon of local prejudice.

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ISAAC BABEL

TWO STORIES

The Deserter

CAPTAIN GEMIER was a splendid fellow, and something of a philosopher as well. On the field of battle he would stop at nothing but in private life he didn't take offense at small things. That's a lot, if a man doesn't take offense at small things. He loved France with a heart-consuming love, and his hatred for the barbarians defiling its ancient soil was, therefore, unextinguishable, merciless, and as lasting as life itself.

What else can one say about Gemier? He loved his wife, he had brought up his children to be good citizens, he was a Frenchman, a patriot, a Parisian, a lover of books and of beautiful things. And now, on one bright, rosy morning in spring, it was reported to Captain Gemier that an unarmed soldier had been picked up between the French and enemy lines. His intention to desert was plain, his guilt beyond doubt, and he was brought in under guard.

"It's you, is it, Bogie?"

"It's me, Captain," the soldier replied, saluting.

"You thought you would take advantage of the dawn to go out for a breath of fresh air?"

The soldier said nothing.

"*C'est bien,* you may leave us." The guards went out and Gemier locked the door after them. The soldier was twenty years old.

"You know what's coming to you, don't you? *Voyons,* tell me all about it."

Bogie hid nothing. He said that he was tired of the war: "I'm very tired of the war, *mon capitaine*! Six nights running now I haven't been able to sleep for the shells. . . ." The war was hateful to him. He hadn't been going to commit treason, but to surrender.

Altogether, he was unexpectedly eloquent, this little fellow Bogie. He said he was only twenty. *Mon Dieu, c'est naturel,* anyone could make a mistake at that age. He had a mother, a girlfriend, *des bons amis.* He had his whole life ahead of him, this twenty-year-old Bogie, and he would make up for the wrong he had done his country.

"Captain, what will my mother say when she hears I've been shot like the worst sort of criminal?" The soldier fell on his knees.

"You won't get my sympathy like that, Bogie!" the captain said. "You were seen by other soldiers. Five men like you, and a whole company gets infected. *C'est la défaite. Cela jamais.* You're going to die, Bogie. But I'm giving you a way out just before you do. They won't learn about your disgrace in the *mairie.* Your mother will be told that you died an honorable death in battle. Let's go."

The soldier went out after his commanding officer. When they came to the wood, the captain stopped, took out his revolver, and handed it to Bogie.

"Here's how you can avoid a court martial. Shoot yourself, Bogie! I'll come back in five minutes. Everything must be over by then."

Gemier walked away. Not a single sound disturbed the silence of the wood. The captain went back. Bogie, his shoulders hunched, was waiting for him.

"I can't, Captain," he whispered. "I don't have the strength. . . ." And he started off again about his mother, his girl, his friends, and about having his whole life ahead of him. . . .

"I'll give you another five minutes, Bogie! Don't make me waste my time just walking around for nothing."

When he returned, the soldier was lying sobbing on the ground. His fingers were around the revolver and moved slightly.

Gemier then pulled him to his feet and, looking him in the eye, said in a gentle, kindly tone of voice, "Bogie, my friend, perhaps you don't know how to do it?"

Without hurrying, he took the revolver out of the youth's wet hands, walked back three paces, and shot him through the head.

GASTON VIDAL writes about this incident in his book. The soldier actually was called Bogie. Whether the name Gemier I have given the captain is the right one, I can't really say. Vidal's story is dedicated to a certain Gemier in token of deep respect. I think this dedication gives the game away. Of course the captain was called

The Russian-Jewish author, ISAAC BABEL, who met his death in a Soviet prison camp, is widely regarded as one of the greatest short story writers in modern literature. Babel's most celebrated works include *Red Cavalry,* a novel about the Russian revolution, and *Tales of Odessa.* The present stories, translated from the Russian by MAX HAYWARD, are published here for the first time in English.

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Gemier. And then, Vidal tells us that the captain really was a patriot, a soldier, a good father, and not a man to take offense at small things. That's a lot, if a man doesn't take offense at small things.

The Quaker

It says in the Commandments: "Thou shalt not kill." That's why Stone, a Quaker, had enlisted as a driver. He was serving his country without committing the terrible sin of murder. With his education and means, he could have got a more exalted position, but, a slave of his conscience, he meekly accepted menial work and the company of people whom he found uncouth.

What was Stone? A bald dome on top of a pole. The Lord had given him a body only to lift up his thoughts above the petty cares of this world. His every movement was no less than a victory of mind over matter. At the wheel of his car, however calamitous the situation, he bore himself with the wooden stiffness of a preacher in the pulpit. Nobody ever saw him laugh.

One morning, when he was not on duty, he took it into his head to go for a walk in order that he might pay homage to the Maker in the midst of His creation. With a huge Bible under his arm, he strode with his long legs across meadows brought back to life by the spring. The sight of the clear sky, the chirping of sparrows in the grass —all this filled him with joy.

Stone sat down and opened his Bible, but at that moment he saw at the turning of a lane an untethered horse with emaciated flanks through which the ribs showed. Immediately he felt a powerful call of duty: at home he was a member of the society for the protection of animals. He went up to the animal, stroked its soft lips, and, forgetting about his walk, set off back to the stables. On the way, his Bible with its clasps still firmly held in his hands, he let the horse drink at a well.

The stableboy was a youth by the name of Baker. The ways of this young man had long been a cause of righteous indignation on the part of Stone: at every stopping place Baker left behind an unconsolable sweetheart.

"I could report you to the major," said Stone, "but I trust that, for this once, what I am about to say to you will suffice. This poor, sick horse, which I have brought here and which you are going to look after, is deserving of a better fate than you."

And he stalked off with measured, solemn steps, ignoring the loud guffaw behind him. The stableboy's square, jutting chin was convincing testimony to an obstinacy that would never be overcome.

A few days went by, but the horse still wandered around untended. This time Stone spoke to Baker in no uncertain terms, addressing him roughly as follows: "It may be, spawn of Satan, that the Almighty has granted you the right to destroy your own soul, but your sins should not be allowed to fall with all their weight on an innocent horse. Just look at it, you scoundrel. It is walking around here in a state of great distress. I am sure that you are ill-treating it, as one might expect from a blackguard like you. Let me repeat, sinner: go to your doom with whatever speed you like, but attend to this horse, or you will have me to reckon with."

From this day onward Stone felt that providence had entrusted him with a special mission: to care for this downtrodden quadruped. He felt that people, for their sins, were scarcely worth bothering about, but he felt boundless compassion for animals. His grueling duties did not prevent him from keeping his promise to God. He often got out of his car at night—he slept in it all curled up on the seat—to go and make sure that the horse was well out of range of Baker's studded boot. If the weather was fine he would mount his beloved animal, and the poor thing, prancing with an air of importance, would bear his long lean body at a trot across the fields now turning green. His face sallow and drained of blood, his pale lips closed tight, Stone recalled the deathless, mirth-provoking figure of the Knight of the Mournful Countenance trotting on his Rosinante amid flowers and tilled fields.

Stone's persistence bore fruit. Feeling himself under constant observation, the groom went to great lengths not to be caught out in the act. But whenever he was alone with the horse, he visited on it all the savagery of his vile nature. For some reason he couldn't explain, he was frightened of the silent Quaker and because of this fear he hated Stone and despised himself. The only way in which he could raise himself in his own eyes was by tormenting the horse which Stone had befriended. Such is the contemptible pride of humans. Locking himself in the stable with the horse, the groom pierced its hairy, hanging lips with red-hot needles, beat it on the back with a lash made of wire, and threw salt in its eyes. When, left alone at last, the tortured animal, blinded by stinging salt and lurching like a drunken man, timidly went to its stall, the groom lay down on his belly and laughed for all he was worth, enjoying his revenge.

After a change in the position at the front, the division to which Stone belonged was transferred to a more dangerous place. His religious beliefs did not allow him to kill, but they permitted him to get killed himself. The Germans were advancing toward the Isère. Stone was transporting the wounded. Round about him people of various

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nationalities were dying fast. Old generals, their faces clean and bumpy, stood on hilltops and spied out the land through field glasses. The big guns roared incessantly. The earth gave off a stench and the sun poked around in the mangled corpses.

Stone forgot about the horse, but after a week his conscience started to nag him again. Seizing the first opportunity, the Quaker went back to the place where they had been before. He found the horse in a dark shed that had been knocked together from rotting planks. The animal was so weak it could hardly stand, and its eyes were covered with a dull film. It whinnied faintly at the sight of its faithful friend and laid its head, which it could scarcely hold up, on his hands.

"It's not my fault," the groom said insolently. "They're not giving us any oats."

"Very well," Stone replied, "I'll get some."

He looked at the sky shining through a hole in the roof, and went out.

I met him a few hours later and asked him whether the road wasn't dangerous. He seemed more self-absorbed than usual. The last few bloody days had left a deep mark on him and he looked as though he was in mourning for himself.

"No trouble so far," he said in a hollow voice, "but there may be at the end of it." And he added, for no apparent reason: "I've come foraging. I have to find some oats."

The next morning he was found dead at the wheel of his car by some soldiers who had been sent to look for him. A bullet had gone right through his skull and his car was in a ditch.

This was how the Quaker Stone died on account of his love for a horse.

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JEWISH DREAMS AND NIGHTMARES

ROBERT ALTER

What have I in common with Jews? I have hardly anything in common with myself and should stand very quietly in a corner, content that I can breathe.

—Franz Kafka, *Diaries*

THERE IS SOMETHING presumptuously proprietary about the whole idea of sorting out writers according to national, ethnic, or religious origins, like so many potatoes whose essential characteristics can be determined by whether they come from Idaho or Maine. Obviously enough, the primary focus for useful criticism of any original writer must be on the stubbornly individual imagination that has sought to articulate a personal sense of self and world through the literary medium, and this attention to individual peculiarities rather than shared characteristics is especially necessary in understanding serious writers since the middle of the last century, so many of whom have been alienated in one way or another from their native social groups. Indeed, as Kafka's chilling confession of self-estrangement reminds us, some of the most troubled, and therefore representative, modern writers have been alienated from themselves as well, haunted by the fear that every affirmation or act of communication was a falsification, a betrayal.

Nevertheless, the onerous question of the writer's background persists. One justifiably speaks of Melville, Hawthorne, even Poe, as essentially American writers, for their achievement cannot be intelligently grasped without an awareness of its intimate relationship with the common social and cultural experience of 19th-century America. Even more strikingly, the Jewishness of writers like Mendele, Peretz, and Sholem Aleichem obviously has the greatest relevance to any serious assessment of their literary enterprise because their fictional worlds are shaped out of the stuff of East-European Jewish life, its language, its folklore, its religious traditions, its social realia. With Jewish writers, however, the attempt to attribute literary qualities to ethnic origins is in many instances acutely problematic. The Jews, in any case a perplexing group to define, become almost perversely elusive as the process of modernization spreads after the French Revolution. It is by no means clear what sense is to be made of the Jewishness of a writer who neither uses a uniquely Jewish language, nor describes a distinctively Jewish milieu, nor draws upon literary traditions that are recognizably Jewish. If one were to compile an anthology of all the unabashed nonsense written by literary critics over the past fifty years, a good many pages would have to be devoted to what has been advanced about the Jewish values, vision, and world-view of a wide variety of apostates, supposed descendants of Jews, offspring of mixed marriages, or merely assimilated Jews, from St. Theresa and Heine down to Proust and even J. D. Salinger.

One cannot, however, simply discount the possibility that some essentially Jewish qualities may adhere to the writing of the most thoroughly acculturated Jews. Most readers have sensed in at least some of these "post-traditional" or "transitional" Jewish writers certain modes of imagination or general orientations toward art and experience that seem characteristically Jewish, even where the writer scrupulously avoids all references to his ethnic origins. The difficulty, of course, is to translate such vague intuitions into clear descriptive statements about what actually goes on in the literary works.

I WAS LED to ponder again this intriguing but treacherous question of Jewish literary identity by an essay of Leslie Fiedler's, "Master of Dreams," published in the Summer 1967 issue of *Partisan Review*. What Fiedler sketches in his essay might be described as a single grand mythic plot which, in sundry variations, modifications, and reversals, is presumed to underlie all Jewish literature, and, apparently, all Jewish cultural activity as well. Fiedler's point of departure is the Joseph story in Genesis, which he interestingly characterizes as a "dream of the dreamer, a myth of myth itself." Joseph, whose troubles begin because of his own seemingly grandiose dream, makes his way to power by interpreting the dreams of others and so translates his original dream into dazzling fact, his father and brothers—and virtually the whole world besides—bowing down to him as viceroy of the mightiest king on earth. In the light of this communal dream of the Joseph story, Fiedler sees the Jew's characteristic cultural role as a vendor

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of dreams and an interpreter of dreams to the world, that is, as poet and therapist (in Fiedler's anecdotal English, "My Son the Artist" and "My Son the Doctor"). The Jewish sons who become poets, according to this account, continue to pursue the original myth of myth: their fictions are about the attempt—what some of them now recognize as a doomed attempt—to make the splendid dream literal fact, and their fictional surrogates are even frequently called upon to resist the temptations of a Potiphar's wife in order to remain faithful to the dream they bear within them. Fiedler concedes that there are wide differences in the literary forms adopted by Jewish writers, but he suggests that they all belong to a single tradition both because they all participate in a Joseph-like myth of myth and because they share a distinctive purpose, which, in keeping with the double role of the biblical master of dreams, is "therapeutic and prophetic."

Before I speak to the issues raised by this interpretation—and the hasty account of it here hardly does justice to its athletic ingenuity—I would like to point out a general characteristic of Fiedler's critical enterprise which this essay makes particularly clear. Fiedler's criticism has a paradoxical doubleness of effect. On the one hand, because his favorite critical activity is the relentless pursuit of archetypes, an ill-considered literary fashion of the 50's that went out with the Eisenhower administration, there is often an odd hint of datedness in what he writes, despite the swinging, up-to-the-minute prose he affects. One senses in Fiedler, on the other hand, a peculiar venturesomeness and energy of imagination that set him off from the academic mythmongers of the 50's, indeed, that endow his work with a perennial fascination. The main impulse of Fiedler's criticism is neither analytic nor evaluative but poetic:* the fidelity it most steadily preserves is not at all to the works or figures discussed but to its own inner coherence as a poetic invention.

The treatment of the biblical subject in "Master of Dreams" suggests a useful analogue for Fiedler's criticism—Midrash, the early rabbinic method of homiletic exegesis. One possible way of describing Midrash is as the art of imaginatively connecting things intrinsically unconnected, and the same could be said of much that Fiedler has written. Since for the creators of the Midrash the entire Bible, together with the Oral Law, exists in one eternal, divinely revealed present, everything is potentially an intricate commentary on everything else. One needs only the recurrence of, say, a verb-root in a verse in Genesis, in Isaiah, and in Psalms, to see the later statements as explications, developments, fuller revelations of the earlier one. When, for example, the Midrash Bereshit Rabba tells us that Abraham's "splitting" of wood for the sacrifice of Isaac was answered on a grand scale by God's "splitting" of the Red Sea for his descendants, our real knowledge of the relevant verses in Genesis and Exodus has not been augmented, but what we may enjoy is following the trajectory of the interpretative imagination from point to point, not unlike the delight we take in the linking of ostensible disparates that is effected through poetic metaphor. This procedure is not so far removed from that of modern archetypal criticism, which in just such an instance might easily speak not of verbal continuities but of "the recurrence of the cleavage motif," with or without Freudian innuendoes.

FIEDLER IS MORE subtle and inventive than most mythopoeic critics in his articulation of archetypes, but he clearly shares with the medieval Midrash an indifference to historical perspective which allows him to speak of the varied literary productions of far-flung times and places as one eternal system, and he is thoroughly midrashic in his readiness to establish through the merest hint of an association a "real" connection between things. Thus, there is actually not the faintest suggestion in the biblical story that Joseph is either a poet or a therapist. He interprets dreams for purposes at once practical and divine, but surely not to cure anyone, while the common association between dreamer and poet which Fiedler invokes is not even vaguely intimated in the biblical account. Though Fiedler would have us think of Joseph as a prototype of both Freud and Kafka, it makes better sense on the grounds of the text itself to imagine Joseph rather as a sort of ancient Near Eastern RAND Corporation figure—the Jewish intellectual as government-planner, manipulating that great Pharaonic power structure from the very top, managing, through his two Seven Year Plans, to centralize control of land and economic resources to a degree unprecedented in Egyptian history. If Fiedler's own bold anachronisms invite anachronistic response, this, too, is in the ahistorical spirit of midrashic interpretation: the rabbis did not hesitate to represent Joseph as an earlocked talmudist applying himself to the subtleties of the Law in the study-house of Shem, and by the same logic he can be given a Viennese beard, a passion for literary self-expression, or a knowledge of computer mathematics.

There is, then, a special fascination in Fiedler's criticism, but as in the case of the ancient Midrashim, we may sometimes want to qualify that fascination with an adjective like "quaint." The real question raised by his whole scheme of an archetypal Jewish myth of myth is not whether it is firmly anchored in the biblical story but whether it is really helpful in locating and identifying a

* In a recent piece, "My First Gothic Novel" (*Novel*, Fall 1967), Fiedler has, while modestly claiming for himself a place with the great critics of the ages, asserted, "I am, almost above all else, an evaluating critic." What this means, though, is that he expresses emphatic opinions about the writers he discusses, not that he offers, in the manner of serious evaluative criticism, reasoned and persuasive criteria for assessing literature.

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distinctive Jewish movement in Western culture, and in this essential regard I cannot see that it has any utility at all. On the contrary, it seems to me to encourage a common error much in need of correction. For there has been a tacit conspiracy afoot in recent years to foist on the American public as peculiarly Jewish various admired characteristics which in fact belong to the common humanity of us all. The Jewish folk is imagined as possessing a kind of monopoly on vividness, compassion, humor, pathos, and the like; Jewish critics and novelists are thought to be unique in their preoccupation with questions of morality; and now we are asked to believe that the Jews have all along exercised a privileged control over the cultural market on dreams.

WHEN FIEDLER characterizes the Joseph story as "the dreamer's own dream of how, dreaming, he makes it in the waking world," and then goes on to represent modern Jewish writing as a varying account of the difficulties of "making it" through dreams in actuality, he is describing not a distinctively Jewish imaginative mode but the central tradition of the novel, from *Don Quixote* to *Lolita*. Cervantes had hit on a new set of literary terms to encompass a new, radically disorienting world (the one we still inhabit) by inventing a dreamer who madly and persistently tried to live out his shining dream in a gray existence stolidly resistant to dreams and intolerant of their perpetrators. The model of the heroically unhinged Don, progenitor of a genre, is followed by Stendhal's Julien Sorel, Flaubert's Emma Bovary, Dostoevsky's Prince Myshkin and his Raskolnikov, Melville's Ahab, George Eliot's Dorothea Brooke, Gide's Lafcadio, Joyce's Stephen Daedalus as well as his Leopold Bloom—in fact, by the protagonists of most of the substantial novels written over the past two centuries. One might of course seize on the conjecture of some literary historians that Cervantes himself was a Marrano or the descendant of converts from Judaism, but this would be to succumb to a kind of philo-Semitic version of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* as an explanation of Western culture. According to such a theory, which seems to be tacitly assumed by many critics, the main currents at least of modern culture all derive from subterranean Jewish sources: a tenuous connection through three Christian generations with Jewish forebears is supposedly enough to infect the writer with a uniquely Jewish imagination, and this in turn he passes on to the Gentile world around him. (Fiedler applies much the same logic to fictional characters in describing the hero of *An American Dream* as an "essentially" Jewish figure by arbitrarily identifying him as a compound of two projected characters in Mailer's unwritten long novel, one Gentile and the other one-quarter Jewish, which then enables him blithely to assert that "Stephen Rojack . . . is half-Jewish, since in the world of myth a quarter Jew plus a full Gentile equals a half-Jew.") All this is undoubtedly somewhat less incredible than the obverse theory that the Jews have secretly seized control of Western civilization in order to destroy it from within, but it resembles the *Protocols* myth in reshaping observable realities to fit the contours of collective fantasy.

It is not the Jewish dreamer in Exile but the writer at large who "thinking only of making his own dreams come true, ends by deciphering the alien dreams of that world as well," and the "prophetic" and "therapeutic" ends which Fiedler assigns to Jewish writers are in fact the general aims of most serious European and American writers at least since the middle of the 19th century. The Joseph scheme works all too well in too many cases, whether we apply it to the writer's life or to his literary creations. Who, for example, could be closer to the archetype of Joseph than Charles Dickens, a master of dreams who determined from early youth to realize a great dream of worldly success and achieved it by creating and selling dreams to the millions—"the artist as tycoon," in F. W. Dupee's telling phrase—even to acquiring the very Gads Hill mansion he had envisaged from afar as a boy? The prophetic and therapeutic impulse in Dickens's novels hardly needs comment at this point in time, and it is equally clear that in the works of his maturity, by bodying forth in fiction his own dreams, he was interpreting the collective dreams of a culture to which part of him remained permanently alien, from his descent into the pit of the blacking warehouse as a child to his glorious assumption into the palaces of the great.

Or, using this same mythic touchstone to identify characteristically Jewish literary inventions, one might justifiably conclude that the most remarkable American Jewish novel is neither *Call It Sleep* nor *Herzog* but Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*. Ellison prefaces his book with a dedication to Morteza Sprague, "a dedicated dreamer in a land most strange," which is a neat description of himself and also accurately the archetypal Joseph himself. The novel characterizes Ellison's protagonist. The novel begins and ends with a dream, and many of the intervening episodes are strikingly dreamlike, for the protagonist is at once attempting to escape a nightmare and realize a dream of worldly success, on the world's own meretricious terms. His slow recognition of who he really is—"I am your brother Joseph," one almost hears him saying in the poignant scene where he realizes his deep kinship with an evicted Harlem couple—involves a rejection of the false dream, a perception of the extent to which the nightmare is reality. In this version, it is at the end of his long journey from home that he is cast into a dark pit, Joseph-like, by those who should be his brothers, and he promises us that he will emerge from these depths with a new, unillusioned strength. There are even

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Potiphar's wives to mislead this young man with a vision on his progress through a land most strange. In contrast to the three sexual partners of Stephen Rojack—that highly suppositious "mythical" Jew—who are improbably seen by Fiedler as Potiphar's wives, the two white seductresses in *Invisible Man* are really imagined as alien women who, by using the hero for their own gratification, would thrust him into a false role, would unwittingly involve him in a symbolic betrayal of himself and his people. It is difficult, finally, to think of a novel written by a Jew as intent as this one on enunciating a prophecy and effecting a kind of therapy. The young Negro, by working out the visions that haunt him, ends up deciphering the darker dreams of American society as well. It is entirely appropriate that the novel should conclude with a long dreamlike sequence charged with intimations of apocalypse, the nightmare now galloping across the waking world, and that this episode in turn should be followed by a formal, allegorical dream of apocalypse, prophesying doom to America if it does not act quickly to redeem its own humanity.

The tracing of archetypes is a pleasant enough pastime, but its value as a means of making useful literary identifications is dubious. Ellison himself has stated the matter succinctly in objecting to another archetypal interpretation of his novel: "archetypes are timeless, novels are time-haunted." If we are to discover any clue to the connection between a writer's origins in a particular group and the nature of his work, we must begin in time, which is to say, we must take history seriously into account. The case of Kafka, whom Fiedler cites as the great modern paradigm of Joseph as artist, the Jewish son as dreamer, takes us to the heart of this whole issue. No other Jew who has contributed significantly to European literature appears so intensely, perhaps disturbingly, Jewish in the quality of his imagination as Kafka. Though he never introduces explicitly Jewish materials into his work, though he never really writes "about" Jews (even symbolically, I would argue), most readers of *The Trial, The Castle, Amerika,* and the shorter parables and fables, have sensed that this peculiar mode of fiction would never have occurred to a Christian imagination. One is struck by the emphatic difference of Kafka's work from the various kinds of fiction that have been predominant in the European novel, but it is not so easy to determine whether or how that difference is Jewish.

TO THINK OF Kafka as a Joseph-figure will not really help us, for reasons which I hope I have already made clear. The invocation of that archetype does not, for example, enable us to distinguish between Kafka and Dickens, a writer whom he admired and imitated, and who shared with him a "Jewish" preoccupation with failed relationships between fathers and sons. Critics have made a variety of other suggestions about the Jewishness of Kafka's fiction, some of them comical, some interesting, some perhaps even credible. To begin with, there has been a general rush to align Kafka with various Jewish cultural traditions, without regard to the degree of familiarity he may actually have had with them. The fact that Kafka is both a Jewish writer and an arcane one has invited a certain degree of loose talk about the "kabbalistic" elements in his work, though he had no direct knowledge of the Kabbalah, and the Germanized home in which he grew up was hardly the sort where he could have picked up very much of it through oral tradition. More plausibly, comparisons have been drawn between the Hasidic folktale and the parable-form Kafka favored in which the order of action is so often inscrutably miraculous. The biographical evidence, however, suggests affinity rather than influence. Kafka was fascinated by whatever he learned of Hasidic lore, but the better part of his acquaintance with it took place toward the end of his life, through his friendship with Georg Langer and from his reading of Buber's early compilations, especially *Der grosse Maggid,* which did not appear until 1922. Again, a good many critics who have never studied a page of Talmud have not hesitated to describe the peculiar questioning movement of Kafka's prose as "talmudic," but there is virtually no real similarity, and in any case Kafka's knowledge of the Talmud, until his last years, was confined to quotations passed on to him by those of his friends who had once studied in the East-European *yeshivot.* One is free to suppose, of course, that Westernized Jews as a rule simply continue to talk and think in talmudic fashion, but such a supposition can be made only out of ignorance of both the Talmud itself and of the way modern Jews actually talk and think.

Heinz Politzer, in his book, *Franz Kafka: Parable and Paradox,* links Kafka's fiction somewhat more probably with a still older mode of Jewish literature. Politzer compares Kafka's spare, taut tales, which repeatedly generate a sense of fatal significance in the events narrated, to the narrative method of the Hebrew Bible. Picking up the notion developed by Erich Auerbach of the biblical story as a tale "fraught with background," Politzer argues that in Kafka's enigmatic fictions one can observe this same general effect of starkly drawn surfaces which suggest a heavy pressure of dark meanings behind them that are never spelled out by the narrator. In Kafka, he goes on to say, as in the ancient Hebrew stories, the characters are at once impersonal and more than personal, uncannily representative in their very distance and peculiarity, inviting multiple interpretation by leading us to think of them as our surrogates in a cosmic drama. Kafka certainly read the Hebrew Bible in translation intently, occasionally even alluded to aspects of his own experience in biblical terms, and at the end of his

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life was learning to read it in its original language. It is at least plausible that his familiarity with the Bible helped him work out his own characteristic narrative art; in any case, he must have discovered in it a compelling imaginative kinship. Such notions of kinship, however, can be adopted for the needs of precise literary analysis only with great caution, for they are but a step away from assuming a Hebrew Imagination over against a Greek Imagination as timeless categories, which, of course, would bring us back through another door into the wide and woolly realm of myths of culture.

Critics less interested in Kafka's treatment of literary form than in his moral, philosophical, and theological concerns have associated him not with Jewish literary traditions but with the distinctive values and assumptions of historical Judaism. Thus, the absence of any radical disjuncture in Kafka between spirit and flesh, this world and the next, even between the prosaic and the miraculous, has been attributed to his Jewish background, which, it must be admitted, is a suggestive idea if not altogether a demonstrable one. The fact, on the other hand, that moral or spiritual obligations in Kafka so often take the form of commandments from an unreachable authority and frequently necessitate tortuous interpretation, can obviously be connected with Kafka's personal awareness of rabbinic Judaism, and represents a particularly Jewish formulation of a general spiritual predicament. Still clearer is the condition of exile—for Jews, a theological category as well as a historical experience—which underlies all of Kafka's major fiction. It is this, above all else, that commentators have quite properly stressed in identifying the distinctively Jewish note in Kafka: if modern literature in general is a literature that adopts the viewpoint of the outsider, Kafka, as the alienated member of an exiled people, is the paradigmatic modernist precisely because he is a paradigmatic Jew.

The general validity of this familiar idea is, I suppose, unassailable, but its usefulness is limited because of the very fact that in its usual formulation it remains so general. "Exile" tends to be applied to Kafka and to other Jewish writers as an evocative but unexamined abstraction with a supposedly fixed meaning, when in fact exile meant different things to different Jews at various times and places, and for most of them, at least until fairly recently, it was quite distinct from alienation, a concept with which many literary critics automatically identify it. It makes sense, therefore, to try to state in concrete terms how this particular writer seems to have encountered the experience of exile and then how that encounter enters into the substance of his imaginative work.

LIVING IN Prague, Kafka of course belonged to a very special kind of double exile—he was a Jew in the Austro-Hungarian empire and a German writer in a Czech city. His position, moreover, as an employee in a state-sponsored insurance agency extended his initial sense of himself as a suspect intruder: at his office he was, as he pointedly phrased it, the single "display-Jew" in a "dark nest of bureaucrats," and so every workday forced upon him at least the negative awareness of Jewishness as a condition of being unwanted, mistrusted, transparently dependent on the favor of others. At the same time, Kafka was acutely conscious of Jewish history and Jewish peoplehood, even without any deep knowledge of the former or very much external involvement in the latter, until the Zionism of his last years. He was inclined to view the Jews of his own generation as in fact transitional, standing uncertainly at the irrevocable end of a long process of Jewish history, but this sense of belonging to a twilight period seems to have had the effect of sharpening his interest in the history and culture of his people. The Yiddish theater in Prague, for example, held a fascination for Kafka out of all proportion to the artistic merit of the plays it presented because he saw in it the living manifestation of an uninhibited, self-sufficient folk culture, unlike anything he had known personally. The mere idea of Yiddish literature continued to attract him—he carefully read and took notes in his diary on Pines's *Histoire de la littérature Judéo-Allemande*—because with its obvious stress on "an uninterrupted tradition of national struggle that determines every work," he envisaged it as an alluring antithesis to that anguished exploration of a private world which writing was for him.

The case of Kafka, the acculturated Jew, shows how a man may feel his way into a body of collective history precisely through his consciousness of being outside it: Kafka brooded over the experience of the people from whom he derived, and I would argue that certain key images and states of awareness that were the product of European Jewish history exerted continual pressure on his imagination as he wrote. In this connection, there is one passage in his recorded conversations with the Czech writer Gustav Janouch that is especially revealing. Janouch had asked him if he still remembered the old Jewish quarter of Prague, largely destroyed before Kafka could have known it; this, according to Janouch, is the reply he received:

> In us it still lives—the dark corners, the secret alleys, shuttered windows, squalid courtyards, rowdy pubs, and sinister inns. We walk through the broad streets of the newly built town. But our steps and our glances are uncertain. Inside we tremble just as before in the ancient streets of our misery. Our heart knows nothing of the slum clearance which has been achieved. The unhealthy old Jewish town within us is far more real than the new hygienic town around us. With our eyes open we walk through a dream: ourselves only a ghost of a vanished age.

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This remarkable statement is a kind of spiritual autobiography, a summary of what the awareness of being a Jew meant in Kafka's inner life; at the same time, it might be observed that what he has in effect described here is the imaginative landscape of all three of his novels—the hidden alleys and sinister attics of *The Trial*, the medieval squalor and confusion of the courtyards, the dubious inns and devious byways in *The Castle*, and even the new-world landscape of *Amerika*, which begins with skyscrapers but breaks off in a dark and filthy garret where the protagonist is held prisoner. The world of Kafka's novels incorporates the maddening impersonality and inscrutability of modern bureaucracy in an image of an insecure medieval community derived from a ghetto which Kafka remembered obsessively without ever having known.

LET ME emphasize that the recognition of such a connection may tell us something about the genesis of Kafka's enigmatic fictions but it is by no means a key to their meaning. What Kafka's imaginative intimacy with the Jewish past did was to give a special shape to the imagery and a particular sharpness to the edge of feeling in his work, but the work is surely not intended as a representation of Jewish experience. It is, for example, a serious misplacement of emphasis to describe *The Castle*, as a few critics have done, as a Zionist myth of an outcast in search of a land, though the novel would not have been conceived in the terms it was and would not carry the conviction it does without Kafka's concrete imagination of uncertain steps and glances along the ancient streets of Jewish misery. Or again, to insist that the eternally exiled hero of "The Hunter Gracchus" is an avatar of the Wandering Jew would be to force a hauntingly elusive tale into the predictable contours of allegory. It seems wiser to say that Kafka's general and untranslatable fable of a wanderer through awesome eternity is imagined with such disturbing intensity because of the presence in the writer of Jewish memories, personal and collective, out of which he could create this particular "ghost of a vanished age" walking open-eyed through a dream of damnation. It is not as an archetypal Jew that Gracchus speaks at the end of the story, but the words and images his inventor chooses for him resonate with the experience of rejection and exclusion of many generations: "Nobody will read what I say here, no one will come to help me; even if all the people were commanded to help me, every door and window would remain shut, everybody would take to bed and draw the bedclothes over his head, the whole earth would become an inn for a night." It is one of those unsettling moments in Kafka when, in the retrospectively ironic light of history, we see the recollection of the past as a grimly accurate prophecy of the future.

Another major theme of Kafka's, which he often connects with the situation of the outsider or pariah, is the irruption of the inhuman into the human, or more generally, the radical ambiguity of what seems to be human. While this movement of his imagination was obviously energized by the tensions and fears of his own private neuroses, it seems to me that his notion of a convergence of inhuman and human frequently draws on his hallucinated memory of the Jewish past. Even in a bizarre story like "A Report to an Academy," which is so far removed from any overt reference to Jews, I would contend that Kafka's fictional invention is formed on a kind of "analogical matrix" of his experience as a transitional Jew. The scientific report, one recalls, is that of a gifted ape who has managed "with an effort which up till now has never been repeated . . . to reach the cultural level of an average European." In the tortuous confinement of a cage so small that he could neither stand nor sit, the idea had dawned on the ape of getting out by imitating his captors, and he began, most appropriately, by learning to spit, and then to drink schnapps by the bottle, an act which at first violently repelled him. In retrospect, the ape stresses again and again that he finds no intrinsic advantage in being human: "there was no attraction for me in imitating human beings; I imitated them because I needed a way out, and for no other reason . . . ah, one learns when one has to; one learns when one needs a way out." Conversely, the ape makes no special plea for apehood; there may be nothing particularly admirable in being an ape rather than a human, but, if one begins as an ape, it is at least an authentic condition, what one would naturally prefer to remain, other things being equal. When at the end of the report the ape adjures his audience, "Do not tell me that it was not worth the trouble," there is a quaver of doubt in his voice: cages are admittedly maddening to live in, but has he not lost a great deal by betraying his native self for a way out, selling his birthright, so to speak, for a mess of lentils?

Now, one of the distinctive qualities of a Kafka parable is that it has no paraphrasable "moral," and I would not want to transform "A Report to an Academy" into an allegory of assimilation. I suspect, however, that this fable which calls into question the whole status of humanity was initially shaped around Kafka's awareness of himself as part of the modern movement of Jews who had emerged from the confinement of ghetto life to join European culture, and that the ape's disquieting ambiguity about his own achievement flows from Kafka's insight into how much of themselves Jews had left behind in their former existence without even the compensation of genuine acceptance in the "human" world outside the cage. The very contrast between human and Jew was one that modernizing Jews themselves implicitly accepted in their desperation for a way out. The poet J. L. Gordon's famous line, "Be a

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man outside and a Jew at home," summed up this whole self-negating mentality as it was articulated in the Hebrew Enlightenment, and Kafka himself must have been particularly struck by Gordon's formulation, for he copied it into his diary when he ran across it in Pines's history.

Typically, however, confusions between human and inhuman in Kafka terrify more than they perplex, and the imaginative core of that terror is often Jewish for this writer who lived so intensely with the fear and trembling of a vanished ghetto. The nightmarish little tale entitled "An Old Manuscript" is paradigmatic in this respect. Again, the terms of reference of the story are as universal as those of some ancient myth. A nameless town in a nameless empire has been taken over by fierce, implacable nomads who speak no recognizably human tongue. The Emperor remains a powerless spectator, shut up in his palace, a little like the symbolic King of banished sons in many of the midrashic parables, while the townspeople, in the person of the cobbler who is the narrator, confess their incapacity to cope with the terrible strangers:

> From my stock, too, they have taken many good articles. But I cannot complain when I see how the butcher, for instance, suffers across the street. As soon as he brings in any meat the nomads snatch it all from him and gobble it up. Even their horses devour flesh; often enough a horseman and his horse are lying side by side, both of them gnawing at the same joint, one at either end. The butcher is nervous and does not dare to stop his deliveries of meat. We understand that, however, and subscribe money to keep him going. If the nomads got no meat, who knows what they might think of doing; who knows anyhow what they may think of, even though they get meat every day.

ONE DOES NOT have to invoke mythic archetypes to feel the bone and blood of Jewish memories in these ghastly images. Behind the nameless nomadic horsemen are dark hordes of Cossacks, Haidameks, pogromists of every breed—the alien and menacing *goy* in his most violent embodiments, speaking no intelligible language, obeying no human laws, even eagerly violating, as we learn in the next paragraph, the Noahide injunction against consuming the flesh of an animal while it is still alive. To the Jew trembling before the torch and axe and sword of the attacker, it seemed that the enemy quite literally could not belong to the same species, and so here the ironic displacement of inhuman and human of "A Report to an Academy" is reversed: the Jew, in the analogical matrix of this story, associated with vulnerable humanity, and the Gentile with inhuman otherness.

What should also be noted is that the story pronounces judgment on the passivity of the townspeople as well as on the stark bestiality of the nomads. Edmund Wilson has accused Kafka of "meaching compliance" with the brutal and unreasonable forces he means to expose in his fiction, but I think this misses the point, for the object of Kafka's "satire" (the term is applied by Wilson) is not only the inhuman powers but also man's pathetic inadequacy of response to them. To put this in terms of the ethnic background of Kafka's imaginings, he never sentimentalized Jewish history; though he was intrigued by the lore of his forebears and their unusual sense of community, he remained ruthlessly honest about the way Jews were. In the passage quoted, one can see a distinctly familiar response of Jews to violence and impending disaster—the attempt to buy off calamity, to temporize with it. (How sadly characteristic that the tradesmen of the community should answer the terrible challenge only by pooling resources to subsidize the principal victim of the invaders!) The story makes clear that this response represents a failure of courage and of imagination as well: in the face of imminent and hideous destruction, where bold, perhaps violent, action is required, the townspeople can muster no more than a piously impotent wringing of hands, a collection of donations, and the grotesquely timid understatement that "This is a misunderstanding of some kind; and it will be the ruin of us."

Kafka, in sum, addressed himself to the broadest questions of human nature and spiritual existence, working with images, actions, and situations that were by design universal in character; but his self-awareness as a Jew and his consciousness of Jewish history impelled his imagination in a particular direction and imparted a peculiar intensity to much of what he wrote, where the abstractness or generality of the parable is strangely wedded to the most concrete sense of actual experience felt and recollected. He could envision the ultimate ambiguities of human life in general with a hyperlucidity because he had experienced them in poignant particularity as a Jew. Out of the stuff of a Jewish experience which he himself thought of as marginal, he was able to create fiction at once universal and hauntingly Jewish.

All this far from exhausts the question of how Kafka's antecedents enter into his writing, but it should at least suggest that there is no simple formulaic key for identifying the Jewish character of all Jewish writers. As I have tried to illustrate in the case of Kafka, one must always attend to the particular ways in which Jewish experience impinges on the individual, and this impingement is bound to differ in small things and large from one writer to the next. The varied materials of art itself, with their confusingly various connections with reality, are more recalcitrant, less pleasingly symmetrical, than the neat designs of archetypal criticism, but, in the final analysis, they are a good deal more interesting.

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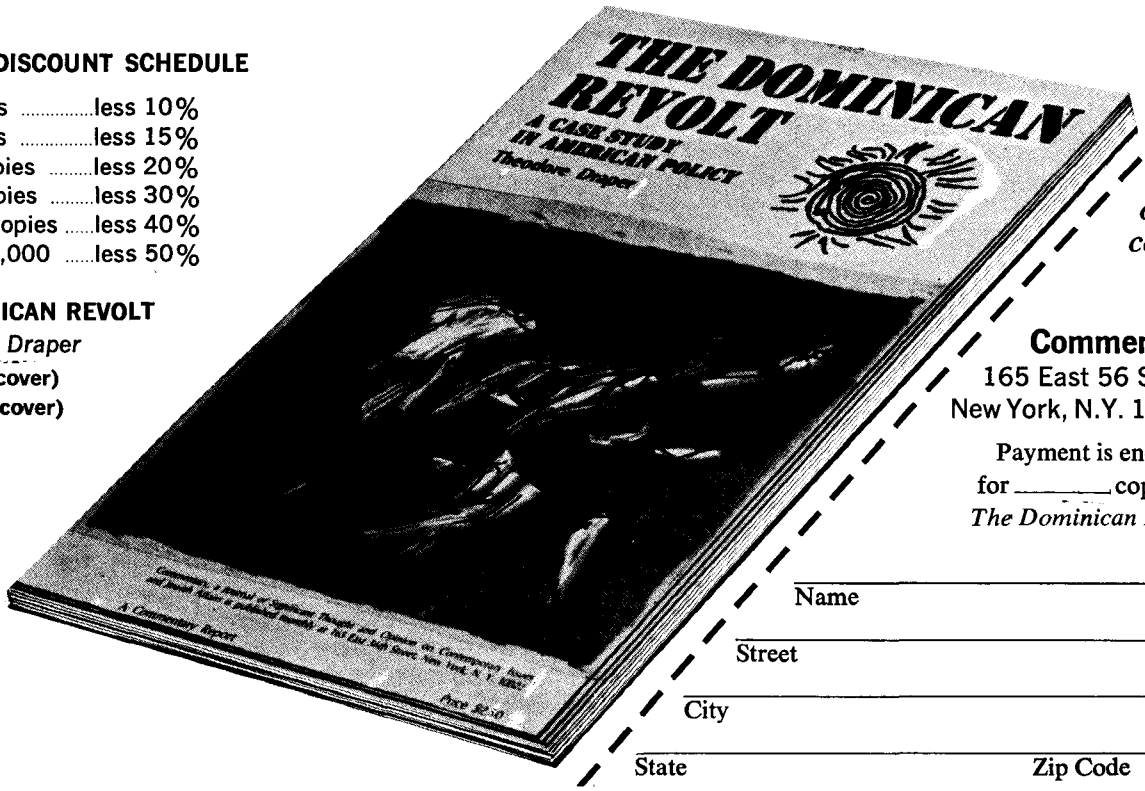

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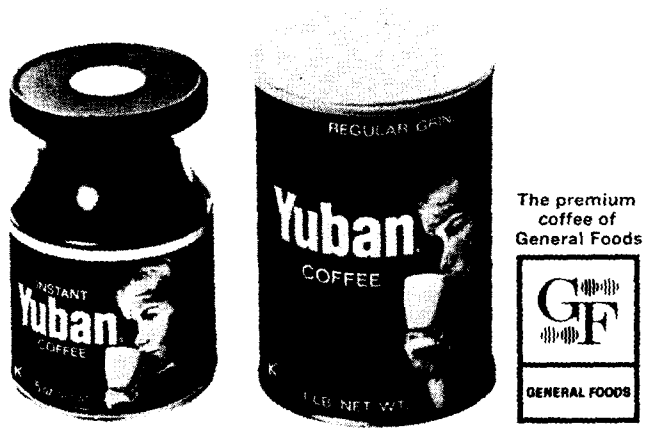

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THE TROUBLE WITH "OUR CROWD"

Marshall Sklare

TEN YEARS AGO, Barry E. Supple, an economic historian then teaching at Harvard, published a scholarly article* which demonstrated that in the 19th century a significant share of American investment banking was concentrated in Jewish hands. In reviewing the history of such banking houses as Kuhn, Loeb; J & W Seligman; Goldman, Sachs; and Lehman Brothers, Supple drew attention to the fact that it was not only common for the children and relatives of the partners of a given firm to marry each other, but that marital alliances frequently occurred among, as well as within, the different Jewish banking houses.

Indeed, Supple's careful analysis showed that the role of marriage in business went even further than this. The scions of banking families would marry the offspring of the owners of large German-Jewish companies in a variety of fields, and these companies—some of them later to become the country's leading department stores and mail-order firms—would then raise capital through the banking houses with whom they had formed family connections. There were banking families, of course, which had even closer ties to the retailing business, having themselves engaged in it at one time. In fact, several of the most important banking houses were established by one or another Bavarian villager who began his American business career by carrying a pack on his back, and later graduated to a horse and wagon. Not all the Jewish banking houses, to be sure, could point to such Horatio-Alger beginnings; some were originated by immigrants who had served their apprenticeship as bankers rather than as peddlers. A few of the founders had come to America with wealth or connections, and others were assisted by European-Jewish financiers (and in some cases served as their American representatives).

Students of American economic history had been aware of the Jewish role in banking long before Supple wrote his article. This role was an influential one because many of the country's great corporations were dependent, especially during their infancy, on the financial resources which only the investment bankers were able to muster. The Jewish firms had no monopoly over corporate financing, for Gentile houses—led by Drexel, Morgan—controlled a substantial share of the banking business. The Gentile houses, however, lacked the network of kinship ties which Supple uncovered in his patient genealogical probing. This is not to say that Supple—who had been a student of R. H. Tawney—was interested primarily in genealogy. Rather, it was his intention to show that the Jewish firms, and not their Gentile counterparts, constituted the "ideal type" of business combination prior to the rise of the mammoth corporation. He was particularly impressed by the tightly knit social network created by the Jewish firms around family, temple, city clubs, and philanthropic organizations; and he viewed their clannishness as "a valid and often necessary means of creating an identity of interests and attitude most conducive to business activity and development."

Neither the business nor the social historians—whether popular or academic—followed up on Supple's investigations. Nor did any stimulus for further research come from Jewish communal bodies, notwithstanding the fact that the Jewish role in investment banking may represent the single most important Jewish contribution to American life (the only possible rival being the Jewish role in leftist politics). It was understandable, however, that Jewish organizations should not seek to encourage scholarship of a kind whose results might easily be used against Jews.

It was thus left to a non-Jewish publishing firm, Harper & Row, to pursue the possibilities of further work in this area. Roger H. Klein, a Harper & Row editor, acting with the endorsement of Cass Canfield, the head of the house, suggested to Stephen Birmingham—a non-Jew previously known mainly as a novelist—that he write the story of the German-Jewish upper class of New York City, with special emphasis on the great Jewish investment bankers. *"Our Crowd": The Great Jewish Families of New York*† is the result of Birmingham's labors.

THE OBVIOUS reason for the interest of Harper & Row in so apparently special a topic is that for nearly two decades Jewish subject-matter has been very popular among American writers and readers. Much of this fascination has been manifested in the area of fiction, where it has been nourished by a ready supply of Jewish novelists. There was good cause to suppose, then, that the interest of the public in Jewish subject-matter could be extended to non-fiction as well.

Yet however important such commercial considerations may have been, they do not fully explain the appearance of this particular book at this particular time. What, we must ask, gave a responsible editor the idea that Jews were ready for the same treatment accorded to the WASP upper class by writers like Cleveland Amory? The answer, probably, is that in the 1960's the status of Jews within American society has reached new and previously unimaginable heights. As the reviewer of *"Our Crowd"* in the New York *Times* put it: "The credentials, status, and repute of American Jews have long awaited the confirmation of this history." For a

* "A Business Elite: German-Jewish Financiers in Nineteenth Century New York" in *Business History Review*, Vol. XXXI, No. 2 (Summer 1957).

† Harper & Row, 404 pp., $8.85.

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minority, recognition takes longer. And, sadly enough, the "confirmation" comes too late to benefit some of those Jewish families who once sought it so eagerly—they are now Gentile.

The reception which has been accorded *"Our Crowd"* shows that the subject was certainly ripe for exploitation. The book has been a best-seller for the past several months; indeed, it has been at the head of the non-fiction list for much of that time. What is more, no one has yet challenged the claim put forward by the book of an exalted social position for Jews. In fact, the opposite has been the case. Louis Auchincloss, who has devoted his talents to the delineation of the WASP upper class of the New York Metropolitan area, has even said that it is hard to understand why *"Our Crowd"* should only have been the first account of the Jewish upper class.

The public, too, has evidently been willing to accept Jews as legitimate members of the American upper class. But even this does not explain the widespread interest in *"Our Crowd."* That interest, one imagines, is in large part a consequence of the fact that while Jews are now thought to be "legitimate," they are not yet considered to be quite like everyone else; their being "different" makes their story that much more intriguing. The extravagances and eccentricities of millionaires are always fascinating, even to those who like to think of themselves as immune to the fantasies evoked by such sagas. But when the millionaires happen to be Jewish, a quality of mystery seems to attach to their lives which makes the resulting fantasy all the more elaborate and delightful.

NOT ONLY DID the publishers choose the right subject for a best-seller; they also located the right author. Before writing *"Our Crowd"* Stephen Birmingham had produced five novels which, though not concerned with Jewish matters at all, had revealed an intense preoccupation with the problems of stratification in American society. He had shown himself especially intrigued by the established upper class—and by those who sought to join its ranks. Moreover, Birmingham is a clever and thoroughly professional writer; he knows how to tell a story and how to make good use of an anecdote.

His professionalism, however, has its dark side. Preoccupied with gaining and holding the reader's interest, Birmingham evinces little concern for the serious implications of his material. And he never deigns to clutter his work with any scholarly apparatus; his footnotes supply additional anecdotes or information but never documentation for his text. At times, he even forgets that he is writing a book of non-fiction. Thus he quotes conversations between the Seligman brothers in the store they set up in Lancaster, Pennsylvania in 1840; between Jacob Schiff and his son Mortimer in New York City a half-century later; and among dozens of other deceased members of "the crowd."

Professional historians will smile at such procedures and at the publisher's boast that Birmingham spent more than a year researching the book. Still, this racy account cannot be dismissed out of hand. It is more than a warmed-over version of what has previously appeared in print. Birmingham employed a researcher to dig out financial records and he himself interviewed both older and younger members of the families which comprised "the crowd." He even succeeded in gaining access to hitherto unused family papers and unpublished autobiographies.

Members of some of the families described in *"Our Crowd"* charge that Birmingham did not make proper use of the material he gathered and that much of the book is inaccurate. According to them, the author gave undue weight to stories told him by unstable individuals with neurotic relationships to their families and ancestors. Such informants, it is claimed, had been waiting for a Birmingham to come along and give them the opportunity to settle old quarrels. Some members of "the crowd" therefore dispute many of the book's tales about the chicaneries, indiscretions, and eccentricities of the various families, particularly their alleged desire to escape the mark of Jewishness. Even when the accuracy of an occasional story has been conceded, the admission has been coupled with an accusation that it nevertheless obscures the true character of the protagonist. There are descendants of "the crowd" who even suspect Birmingham of prejudice against Jews, and charge that his book has become a source of anti-Semitism.

Conferences between the families constituting "the crowd" and the publisher took place prior to publication of the book, and as a result Birmingham agreed to make a number of changes. Even so, feelings against him still run very strong. If the families finally decided to let the matter drop, it was certainly not because they were any less convinced that right was on their side, but because they were wary of the publicity that would result from a lawsuit. Then, too, they remembered the contretemps which surrounded the publication of another Harper & Row success, *The Death of a President.*

II

ANYONE WHO writes about the rich has the opportunity to emphasize the foibles of the human species, and there can be no doubt that Birmingham availed himself of that opportunity to the fullest possible extent. For example, he recounts Washington Guggenheim's theory of diet, which was based on the idea that charcoal and cracked ice had therapeutic value, and which led him to have his suit-jackets constructed with a zinc-lined pocket—so that he could always carry a supply of ice with him. But such a story proves nothing about "the crowd," which always thought of the Guggenheims as queer and irresponsible anyway. More problematic—and more prone to give rise to resentment—are the stories Birmingham tells about Jacob Schiff. According to Birmingham, that most princely of philanthropists placed a record book next to the telephone in his home, requiring all members of his household to list their long-distance calls. Lest he be overcharged, Schiff periodically, and laboriously, checked the record book against his phone bill.

If accurate, such stories are unobjectionable and belong in a book

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of this type. They are, after all, the very stuff of life, and they can, in their own way, be quite instructive. Thus one can learn a good deal from the many anecdotes Birmingham retells about Felix Warburg's difficulties with his father-in-law, Schiff. These difficulties sprang from Schiff's extraordinarily intense attachment to his daughter Frieda. Adhering as he did to Jewish norms, Schiff could not deny marriage to his child, but he could, and did, resent the man who had won her hand. The conflict between the two men came to a head when Warburg decided, against his father-in-law's will, to build his own home at 1109 Fifth Avenue (the building which now houses the Jewish Museum). Thereupon Schiff became so hostile that at one point Warburg was ready to resign his position at Kuhn, Loeb —the firm headed by Schiff.

Where more serious matters are concerned, however, the limits of Birmingham's anecdotal method reveal themselves very clearly. One example is another story he tells about Felix Warburg. The latter considered it absolutely essential that his sons and nephews be educated at a proper New England prep school, in spite of the fact that most such schools—including Middlesex, the one he selected—demanded that their students attend compulsory chapel services. Since Warburg was an eminent leader of the Jewish community, his feelings about prep schools could provide spectacular evidence for the late Kurt Lewin's notion that Jewish leadership tends to be "leadership from the periphery." But Birmingham shows no interest whatever in this problem, nor does he provide the reader with adequate raw material for investigating it further. Instead there is a further anecdote: Warburg's nephew, James Warburg, once expressed a desire to become a rabbi, but by the time he graduated from Middlesex the ambition had left him. In what, if any, way was James Warburg's education at Middlesex responsible for this change of mind? One is not told. And so it is with most of the important issues raised by some of the stories in the book.

At times, Birmingham's anecdotal framework is worse than useless; it actually obscures the real story of the great Jewish families of New York. This can be seen from the contrast between the way Birmingham writes about Adolph Lewisohn and the treatment he accords Herbert Lehman. Birmingham dotes on Lewisohn, going into great detail about his fancy parties, his enormous tips to barbers, his tap-dancing lessons at the age of eighty, and his escapades as a playboy. About Herbert Lehman, however, one finds very little. The reason is obvious: Lehman lacks "color"; none of the parties *he* gave would hold a reader's interest. Nevertheless, Lehman's life is more representative than Lewisohn's of the German-Jewish upper class, and far more appropriate as a case-study of the aspirations of that class.

ONE CHARGE that has been made against *"Our Crowd"* is patently absurd. The book does *not* denigrate the German-Jewish upper class; its bias lies in quite the opposite direction. In fact, Birmingham's accuracy and motives are suspect precisely *because* he elevates the families to so lofty a plane. He states his guiding theme clearly at the beginning of the book:

> These German Jewish families are more than a collective American success story. At the point in time when they were a cohesive, knit, and recognizably distinct part of New York society, they were the closest thing to Aristocracy—Aristocracy in the best sense—that the city, and perhaps the country, had seen.

For Birmingham, then, the German-Jewish families were the true aristocrats of their time because their way of life was morally superior to that of the Gentiles. Everywhere in this book he sees Jewish modesty in contrast to Gentile display, Jewish innocence in contrast to Gentile decadence, Jewish concern with community in contrast to Gentile concern with self. He approvingly quotes one of "the crowd" as follows:

> "Mrs. Astor's sort of society was quite a different sort of thing from ours. You might say hers was the opposite. Hers was based on publicity, showiness, cruelty, and striving. Ours was based on family, and a quiet enjoyment of the people we loved."

(It may be a sign of the times that while expressions of ethnocentrism are increasingly difficult to evoke among Jews today, the notion of Jewish superiority should be so readily advanced by Gentiles.)

Why this emphasis on Jewish virtue? Birmingham, a firm believer in the aristocratic principle, is apparently troubled by the dry rot in the WASP establishment, and sees the Jews as a reformist influence. He believes that the Jewish example justifies the aristocratic principle by demonstrating that an aristocracy can deserve the privileges it arrogates to itself. Thus he views the Jew as a moral guide for a corrupt America. It is from the Jew that the Gentile can learn virtue; it is from the Jew, with his love of family, that the Gentile can learn to appreciate the pleasures of the simple life. Birmingham's mission, as he sees it, is to bring the lives of some eminent Jews to public attention, so that they may serve as an example:

> It was my feeling, when I considered this book, that such names as Lehman, Lewisohn, Schiff, Loeb, Warburg, Guggenheim, Seligman, Kahn, Straus, Goldman, and Sachs are nationally and in most cases, internationally known. They stand for banking and industrial efficiency, government service, philanthropy, and vast patronage of the arts, science, and education. And yet, due to a persistent reticence and unwillingness to boast—which in themselves are noble attributes—the men and women who made these names celebrated are little understood as human beings.

Yet even if one assumes that Birmingham's high assessment of Jews is justified, one might still deny that Jewish superiority can serve as a relevant model for Gentile emulation. It would be possible, for instance, to argue that the virtue of the Jews stems not from their culture but from their minority position. Those who hold that Jewish political liberalism is a result of Jewish marginality rather

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than Jewish magnanimity might analyze the other desirable qualities of Jews—modesty, innocence, inconspicuousness, devotion to duty, concern with family and community—from the same perspective. Thus it might be maintained that Jewish insecurity imposes such binding psychological constraints as to produce a strong superego. (Some Jews, of course, have been able to "emancipate" themselves—including, for example, certain members of "the crowd"—and their families produced individuals whose decadence and irresponsibility were in no way inferior to anything the Gentiles had to offer.) If one can trace Jewish virtue to Jewish marginality, then Gentiles have nothing to learn from Jews.

It is not, however, necessary to confront Birmingham with the above position (admittedly a debatable one), for he does not ever offer any hard evidence to show that Jews are in fact superior to Gentiles. His reliance on anecdotes simply does not allow him to accumulate the necessary data for proving his case. We do know from other sources that Jewish philanthropy, and the communal organizations which the German-Jewish families helped to establish, were unique in the range and depth of their social services. But this is not enough to justify Birmingham's claim that the German Jew is the true aristocrat. Indeed, such evidence as can be found in "*Our Crowd*" seems to contradict his assumptions on this score, for it appears that the German Jew, far from harboring proclivities to aloof aristocracy, had a tendency to integrate himself ever more closely into the general society—a tendency involving behavior the very opposite of what is expected of an aristocracy. For example, Birmingham mentions that one family instructed its chauffeur to avoid weaving in and out of Manhattan traffic. The family was not in this instance concerned about courtesy or safety, but merely wanted to avoid the charge that Jews are pushy. Birmingham also relates that:

> James Speyer married a Gentile girl named Ellin Prince whose ancestry traced back to colonial days. He was so proud of his wife's antecedents that, in his listing in *Who's Who*, he included her parents' names (including her mother's maiden name). Yet his own parents' names he omitted.

This is the deportment of a *parvenu*, not of an aristocrat. It is, of course, true that Speyer's action is indicative of a psychological state so extreme that it must be classified as pathological. But it is also true that even well-meaning and balanced men among the German Jews felt a strong attraction to the world of the Four Hundred—an attraction that could not easily be squared with aristocratic demeanor.

THE STORY I have cited of Felix Warburg's desire to enroll members of his family in a fashionable prep school provides further evidence against Birmingham's case. As long as the horizon of the German-Jewish upper class was limited to the Jewish community, that class was content with its own private schools (pre-eminently Dr. Sachs's Collegiate Institute, established in 1871 by Julius Sachs, the scholarly son of the co-founder of Goldman, Sachs). Aristocratic behavior could be preserved in such a setting: the curriculum could reflect the group's culture and aspirations, and the parents of the students were essentially equals. However, when the shift to Middlesex and similar schools took place, the Jew was transformed into an unequal. He had to knock on the door for admission; he had to repress the desire to protest against anything which displeased him; he had to make himself agreeable. In short, the Jew could no longer afford to practice the aristocratic virtues.

But then it must be realized that Birmingham, for all his advocacy of the aristocratic principle, at bottom wants Jews to be *Gentile* aristocrats; he does not approve of the Jew who wishes to be a *Jewish* aristocrat. Since he is not alone in this preference, his position is of more than casual interest. A few years ago, E. Digby Baltzell, in *The Protestant Establishment*, displayed the same orientation. Baltzell shares Birmingham's admiration for Jews and he too ascribes great virtue to them, but as Richard L. Rubenstein has argued,* he focuses his criticism on the rejection by the WASP establishment of the assimilating Jew, rather than on the treatment accorded to the Jew who wishes to preserve his separate identity. Both Baltzell and Birmingham view assimilation as the price the minority should be willing to pay for its acceptance by the majority. Thus, in their very criticism of the shortcomings of the WASP establishment, they reveal how deeply they share its assumptions.

Though Birmingham never confronts the question of assimilation directly, his feelings become apparent at crucial points in the book, especially when he discusses Jacob Schiff and Otto Kahn. These Kuhn, Loeb partners, inseparable in business, were radically different in personality and ideology. Schiff was ever the loyal Jew; his piety was the standard by which others in "the crowd" measured themselves. Kahn, by contrast, was the prototype of the marginal and assimilating Jew. He kept his children ignorant of their Jewish background, and if it had not been for the advent of Nazism he would have ended his life as a convert to Catholicism.

Birmingham portrays Kahn in a most favorable light. For example, Kahn's handling of his relationship with the Metropolitan Opera strikes Birmingham as altogether correct and manly. Kahn had bought up such quantities of opera stock that he became the virtual owner of the organization, but he did not become so in order to make a profit. In fact, he gave the Opera a substantial contribution each year to help it meet its inevitable deficit. Working unceasingly for the welfare of the company, he made it the very center of his life. The energy which Schiff invested in Jewish philanthropic and communal endeavor, Kahn invested in the Metropolitan. But in spite of his utter and unrivaled devotion to the welfare of the organization, Kahn was denied a box in the Diamond Horseshoe—because he was Jewish. Birmingham approves of Kahn's silence in the face of this

* "The Protestant Establishment and the Jews," *Judaism*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Spring, 1965), pp. 131-145.

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flagrant act of discrimination, even as he approves of Kahn's reaction to the offer of a box when it was finally tendered. Instead of rejecting that offer as too little and too late, Kahn accepted graciously. But he did not actually occupy the box; he explained that he would hold it for the use of foreign dignitaries visiting the city. According to Birmingham, this was probably the grandest gesture he could have made. "It contained tolerance, wit, and just the right touch of derision."

WHILE BIRMINGHAM always interprets Kahn's behavior in the most favorable possible terms, he shows no such partiality to Jacob Schiff. He does, of course, pay tribute to Schiff's exemplary record of philanthropy, and he marvels at Schiff's courage in defending the Jewish cause. That courage was especially in evidence during World War I, when Schiff supported measures to provide Britain and France with financial aid but would not, even at the risk of being labeled pro-German, participate in the floating of Allied loans from which Tsarist Russia might benefit. Schiff simply refused to support a government which persecuted Jews. Kahn, on the other hand, had no such scruples—a fact which Birmingham overlooks. When Schiff offered to resign from Kuhn, Loeb rather than change his position on this issue, Kahn agreed that the firm should reject the resignation, but he immediately took charge of a public-relations campaign which was designed to repair the damage that had been caused by Schiff's forthright position.

Schiff was the closest thing to an aristocrat that American Jewry has ever had, but Birmingham cannot accept him as such. This can be seen from his comments on a story he tells about Schiff. The latter's son Mortimer had graduated from Dr. Sachs's Collegiate Institute when he was barely sixteen. Schiff, who felt that the boy should not enter college immediately, was attracted—as his son-in-law was later to be—by the idea of sending him to prep school. He thought of enrolling "Morti" in Groton for a year and proceeded to communicate with the school's headmaster, Endicott Peabody. In his letter, Schiff

> . . . pointed out that Morti had been brought up "a conscious Jew," and therefore would have to be excused from all religious and chapel activities. There followed what the family described as "an exchange of dignified and amiable letters" which ended up with "mutual agreement" that Groton was not the school for Morti.

Birmingham is amazed and chagrined by Schiff's audacity:

> Now, why Jacob Schiff would even for a moment have suspected that Groton might have been the school for Morti is, at first glance, unfathomable. The year was 1893, and Groton was only ten years old. It had been founded by Peabody on the theory that the traditions and tenets of the Episcopal Church, combined with those of the English public school, would be most likely to produce ideal "Christian gentlemen" in the United States. The words "Christian," "Protestant Episcopal," and "Church of England" reappeared dozens of times throughout the school's prospectus; its first board of trustees included two bishops of the state of Massachusetts and a distinguished assortment of other Gentile Easterners, including J. Pierpont Morgan. Schiff must have known these things.

Schiff did indeed know these things and it is an indication of the contradictory pulls experienced by even the most intensely Jewish member of "the crowd" that he was at all interested in Groton. But surely Schiff's action reveals nothing so much as that he felt himself to be—and was—an aristocrat. He had a long and notable family tree; he even looked upon the Rothschilds as well as the Warburgs as *arrivistes*. In his view, Groton should have been happy to enroll a Schiff, and to make the necessary accommodations for him.

Since Birmingham is not prepared to accept behavior that is both genuinely aristocratic and genuinely Jewish, he must ascribe a variety of low motives to Schiff. He therefore speculates that by writing to Peabody as he did, Schiff may have been trying to provoke an anti-Semitic incident which would not only allow him to emerge as a hero who fought prejudice, but would also strike a blow at J. P. Morgan, who was connected with Groton: ". . . Wall Street rivalries may also have been involved. . . . Schiff may have thought that Kuhn, Loeb could gain if its Gentile rival—Morgan—could be discredited." Since Birmingham does not adduce a shred of evidence to support this line of reasoning, his speculations prove only one thing: that he cannot understand a Jew who has the temerity to make demands on the WASP establishment.

III

THE ERA in which, according to Supple, the German-Jewish families created a network of relationships highly conducive to business activity has passed into history. The Jewish investment houses that have survived and prospered are no longer family firms; nor, indeed, are they run exclusively by Jews. And, due to the changing character of the American economy, even the most important of these firms wield nothing like their former power. Some members of the German-Jewish upper class still occupy prominent positions in these houses, but their authority—both in the world at large and in the Jewish community—is not to be compared with that of men like Schiff. Even in the area of philanthropy the role of "the crowd" has declined. For several decades now, no significant charitable project in the Jewish community has been able to base itself solely on the "network of relationships" of the old German-Jewish upper class.

It was inevitable that the position of that class should decline, for its dominance was based on social and economic conditions which no longer obtain. But what of its Jewish character? Some descendants of "the crowd" are no longer Jewish at all, their parents having assimilated completely or converted to Christianity, but those who are still Jewish have the awesome responsibility of determining what the nature of their group identity should be and what heritage they should pass on to the next generation.

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In the past, much of the cohesiveness of "the crowd" was connected with *Familiengefühl,* but today "family feeling" constitutes a very shaky basis for preserving the identity of a group. Other factors also compound the difficulty confronting the upper-class German Jew in America when he attempts to resist assimilation. While long on family loyalty, the German Jew has always been short on religious enthusiasm. Moreover, his adherence to German culture has been dealt a severe blow by this century, and even his interest in philanthropy has created identity problems. With Jewish neediness on the wane, it becomes ever more difficult to justify the primacy of specifically Jewish charitable activities on purely humanitarian grounds. Gentile philanthropic organizations now vie for the participation of generous Jews, and the Jew's reputation as a culture lover has led a growing number of orchestras, theater groups, and museums to invite Jewish collaboration. Needless to say, such collaboration is no longer purchased at the price Otto Kahn once had to pay.

BIRMINGHAM would probably claim that all this is for the best, so certain does he seem to be that everything is turning out well in this nation of immigrants; but those of us who have a different view of the proper place of minority groups in American society are not so optimistic. Birmingham quotes one of his informants as saying that the pattern of "the crowd" consisted of being "just a little bit Jewish." For some decades such an improbable pattern was a viable one, but everything we know points to the fact that the era in which it was possible to be "just a little bit Jewish" is rapidly drawing to a close. Thus the most trying days for "the crowd"—and for all of American Jewry—may still lie ahead.

MARSHALL SKLARE *teaches sociology at Yeshiva University. He is the senior author of a recently-published study,* Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier *(Basic Books).*

* * *

IN MEMORY OF GUIDO CANTELLI

B. H. Haggin

WHEN GUIDO CANTELLI was killed in an airplane crash on November 24, 1956, the loss was what it would have been if Arturo Toscanini had been killed in a train wreck in 1903. This is not just my belief: in the talks about Toscanini that I had with NBC Symphony musicians for the book *The Toscanini Musicians Knew,** a musician would be describing something remarkable about Toscanini, and would remember that it had been true also of Cantelli. For example, Toscanini was a conductor who didn't have to say what he wanted the orchestra to do: he showed it with the movements of his stick, which the players watched and understood and obeyed; and Cantelli also was such a conductor. Toscanini got the players to do what he wanted because he had the personality and magnetism that compelled their attention: they *had* to look at him, and when they looked and saw what he wanted, they *had* to do it; and this was true also of Cantelli. The conductors who instead talked—which the players hated—did so because they didn't have Toscanini's rehearsal technique, his knowledge of how to get and keep an orchestra's attention and communicate to it what was in his mind; and so a rehearsal with Ansermet, who was a fine musician but talked too much, was something the players dreaded, whereas a rehearsal with Toscanini —or with Cantelli—was something they looked forward to. The recollection of how Toscanini had heard, in a huge orchestral climax, the B-natural a contrabassoonist was playing from his part instead of the B-flat Toscanini remembered in the score, led one player to observe that Toscanini's was one of the three great ears he had encountered—the others having been Monteux's and Cantelli's. This player recalled Cantelli's performing Bartók's *Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta* with the feeling for balance and clarity of detail that Toscanini had with Beethoven, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, and Debussy, and said: "That was why Maestro sat in the hall during Cantelli's rehearsals beaming like a proud father: if he had had a son who was musically endowed, this was what he would have wanted him to be."

This statement was supported by recollections of mine. In January 1949 Toscanini—who had invited Cantelli to conduct the NBC Symphony after hearing him in Milan the preceding summer—said to me on the telephone: "Yes, come to rehearsal. You must hear this young conductor." At the rehearsals in Studio 8H I saw Toscanini—who was too nearsighted to see Cantelli—nodding his head in approval and smiling in pleasure at what he heard. And in conversation a couple of months later he said of Cantelli: "I love this young conductor. I think is like me when I was young." He continued to have Cantelli conduct the NBC Symphony every season until the disbanding of the orchestra in 1954; and I read his letter of warm recommendation that caused the Philadelphia Orchestra to engage Cantelli in February 1949 as a replacement for a guest conductor who had become ill. All this contradicts the statement of Toscanini's son Walter (who is not musically endowed) in a letter to a Mr. Keith Bennett, who quoted it in a letter to *The Gramophone*: "You should not in any way state that Guido Cantelli was my father's protégé," as it contradicts Walter Toscanini's statement in a broadcast that it had been Cantelli's dedication, rather than his musicianship, that his father had admired.

TOSCANINI's statement, "I think is like me when I was young," not only expressed his recognition and admiration of Cantelli's musical powers, but may have revealed a perception of something which many didn't perceive. From the fact that Cantelli was Toscanini's protégé, it was easy to infer that he was Toscanini's disciple, who produced performances modeled after Toscanini's that didn't yet equal his but would in time. This made it possible for critics whose writing was an operation of one-upmanship to use with Can-

* Horizon Press, 1967.

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telli the immaturity ploy that is so plausible and so profitable—a memorable example being the statement intended to convey to the reader the fullness of long-accumulated experience and expertise which enabled Irving Kolodin to perceive that "that degree of musical culture and experience which can settle, almost instinctively, on proper tempi and sonorous values for such works as the . . . Mozart are not yet his"—this concerning a performance of Mozart's Divertimento K.287 which exhibited, among other things, Cantelli's sure instinct for right tempos and sonorities. As it happened, that very performance of Mozart's Divertimento had—in addition to its interest in and for itself as a marvelous realization of the piece—fascinating interest as a demonstration of the important differences there were between the Cantelli and Toscanini operations, in addition to their similarities. Cantelli did, like Toscanini, bring to his task a complete commitment of his musical powers and his personal energies, an insistence on the complete achievement in sound of the image of the music in his mind; he did, like Toscanini, shape a work strictly on the lines laid out by the composer's directions about tempo and dynamics in the score; the shaped progression, like Toscanini's, did have unfailing continuity of impetus and organic coherence, marvelous clarity of outline, structure and texture; and it did, like Toscanini's, offer orchestral playing of extraordinary precision and beauty. But there were also the differences which their performances of the Mozart Divertimento demonstrated:

> It was interesting [I wrote in 1954] to hear Cantelli conduct the New York Philharmonic in the Mozart Divertimento K.287 that Toscanini recorded a few years ago—interesting, that is, to hear how different Cantelli's performance was, and how beautiful in its different way. Some of the fast movements were slower-paced and more easygoing, making possible the outlining of *smaller details within the flow of* the larger phrases—a flow that had a beautiful and moving lyricism and grace, as against the powerful impulse operating in Toscanini's treatment. This was the difference also in their performances of the slow movement —a beautifully shaped and eloquent vocal aria as Cantelli played it; one to which Toscanini's power imparts a largeness of span and expressive effect, a tension, a grandeur that become overwhelming.

Two years later, writing after Cantelli's death, I described the difference as one between "the power creating a continuous tension" in Toscanini's performances, and the "youthful lyricism and grace" in Cantelli's. And this youthful quality of the lyricism and grace may have been what Toscanini connected with his own performances of his youth.

One thing I feel sure of: that Toscanini didn't confuse the youthful quality with immaturity. Cantelli's performances certainly would have changed in time; but each as he produced it then emerged as something completely and marvelously achieved. And I feel sure that as he listened to the performance of Mozart's Divertimento that was so different from his own, Toscanini didn't find it inferior to his own. It might, later, have acquired some of the power, tension, and grandeur of Toscanini's; but as it emerged in 1954 it was, in its own way, as distinguished as his. So with the Beethoven Fifth that Cantelli broadcast with the NBC Symphony in 1954—fresh, different from Toscanini's, but in its different way as valid, as convincing, as overwhelming in impact, though—as against the exercise of power in Toscanini's—it seems to assume its emerging shape in sound by itself, without human effort, in its own world of quiet and serenity. And so with the Schubert Ninth that Cantelli broadcast with the NBC Symphony in 1953—differently but as superbly articulated as Toscanini's, and again appearing to come into being, in quiet and serenity, without human effort.

When Cantelli was killed in 1956 he had just been appointed chief conductor at La Scala; and if he had lived he would, like Toscanini, have become a figure of worldwide renown and interest; as such he would have made a large number of recordings that would have kept his work alive for interested listeners after his death. But he died before he had achieved such eminence and produced many records; and with no fame to interest the public in them, the few recordings he had made disappeared from the catalogue. In the past year, however, Angel has reissued on its new low-priced Seraphim records his performances of Mendelssohn's *Italian* Symphony, Schubert's *Unfinished,* and Beethoven's Seventh, and it may be that renewed interest will lead Angel and RCA Victor to reissue his other recordings. But these would still constitute a small number; and Angel should do for Cantelli what it has done for Dinu Lipatti, the extraordinary pianist who also died young, leaving very few performances on records. A few years ago it issued a recording of his performance of a Mozart concerto that it had processed from an unearthed tape of a concert in Zürich; last year it issued another such recording of his performance of a Chopin concerto. Now it should issue those Cantelli performances of Mozart's Divertimento K.287, Bethoven's Fifth, and Schubert's Ninth that I discussed earlier, which could be processed from the CBS and NBC tapes in the Historical Sound Recordings Program at Yale University Library, which I heard, or from outsiders' recordings of the broadcasts. Nor should Angel stop there: a large number of additional performances could be obtained from Cantelli's broadcasts during his six guest engagements with the NBC Symphony and his five with the New York Philharmonic. Many of those performances I found marvelous at the time; and marvelous is the word for those I have heard recently—in particular the one of Mozart's Piano Concerto K.467 that a California reader taped in 1955. Only Toscanini, in my experience, provided soloists with orchestral contexts as beautifully made and as effective as Cantelli's; and Toscanini provided the one precedent in my experience for the astounding thing that happens in Cantelli's performance of K.467.

At a Friday afternoon New York Philharmonic concert in 1933, I heard Toscanini perform K.467

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and 466 with Iturbi as soloist, and heard Iturbi—under the compulsion of the personality and magnetism of the man on the podium—match the orchestra's powerful playing with playing of his own that was strikingly different from his customary prettified salon-style playing of Mozart: I still retain the image of Iturbi, in the great Andante of K.467, sitting as though hypnotized with his eyes on Toscanini, and enunciating the piano's long cantilena with a largeness and grandness of phrase that no one had ever heard from him before or has heard from him since. And the same thing happens in Cantelli's performance of K.467. What one expects to hear after the superbly performed orchestral introduction is the finely chiseled miniature-scale playing of Mozart that one always heard Gieseking do; but what one hears instead is a strongly enunciated, strongly phrased playing of melody, a strong-fingered execution of runs and figuration, that may have amazed Gieseking as it must have amazed his listeners at the New York Philharmonic concert in 1955. He had never played Mozart that way before; and he did so then under the same compulsion from Cantelli as Toscanini had exercised on Iturbi. Under that compulsion Iturbi achieved, and Gieseking achieves, in the extraordinary Andante what I have heard from no other pianist: an enunciation and articulation of the piano's long cantilena comparable with Schnabel's in his recorded performance on Angel COLH-67. And Gieseking's playing of this cantilena, unlike Schnabel's, is heard in the context of the superb playing of the constantly active orchestral part—e.g., the poignant woodwind comments intensifying certain of the piano's statements. Which means that I am urging Angel to issue what would be the greatest performance of K.467 on commercial records.

In addition I have a copy of an excellent off-the-air recording of Cantelli's 1954 performance of Verdi's *Requiem* with the Boston Symphony which, if processed by Angel, would provide the only other performance of the magnitude of Toscanini's on records. I have also a murky-sounding tape of a marvelous performance of Mozart's *Requiem* at the 1950 Edinburgh Festival, of which the BBC presumably has the original recording that Angel could process. And if one of the performances of *Così Fan Tutte* that Cantelli conducted at the Piccola Scala in 1956 was broadcast, there may be a tape from which a commercial recording could be processed.

IF ALL THESE additional Cantelli performances were made available on commercial records, it would be something to rejoice over; but in my opinion it still would not be enough. And the particular case of Cantelli provides the occasion to make a general point: that we are far from achieving, or even thinking of attempting, what our technology makes possible in keeping the works of great performers of the past on public view as the works of great painters of the past are in museums. We have limited ourselves to the commercial phonograph record, which has preserved a great performer's works only as long after his death as his records were bought in quantities the record companies considered sufficient to justify continued production. In the case of a young conductor like Cantelli this was only a few years. But even in the case of someone as celebrated as Toscanini, sales of his records after his death dropped enough for a number of them—with his performances of Act 2 of Gluck's *Orfeo*, Mozart's Divertimento K.287, Berlioz's *Harold in Italy*, Mendelssohn's *Midsummer Night's Dream* music, Tchaikovsky's *Manfred*, Strauss's *Don Quixote*—to be discontinued. That still left a large number available, as against none of Cantelli's. But the number of Toscanini performances on commercial records is a fraction of the number on the records NBC made of all the NBC Symphony broadcasts from December 1937 to April 1954. These NBC performances include some works Toscanini never recorded for Victor—Haydn's Symphonies Nos. 92, 99, and 104, Mozart's *Prague* Symphony, Stravinsky's *Petrushka*, among others. They also include fascinatingly different versions of the performances he did record for Victor. Moreover, they include the performances of the early years 1937-43, whereas the Victor records have performances recorded mostly in the years 1944-54; and the earlier performances differ from the later ones in ways that make them even greater than the later ones. One difference is the breathtaking energy and fire of the early performances: as one player remarked, Toscanini was younger and everyone in the orchestra was working like crazy, and it was a better orchestra in those years. Not that the later performances are ever deficient in energy, but that the early ones have even more. And another difference is that the early performances, though energetic, are relaxed and expansive, organizing, articulating, and shaping the substance of a movement with much elasticity of tempo and much sharply outlined inflection of phrase; wheras the later ones reveal a change, not in the essential Toscanini style, but in his taste, which causes him to do the same things with more economy and subtlety: the performances are swifter, tauter, and simplified, setting a tempo which is maintained with only slight modification throughout the movement, and giving the phrase only subtle inflection. Listened to by themselves, the later ones—the 1953 Schubert Ninth, the 1951 Verdi *Requiem*, the 1953 Beethoven *Missa Solemnis* on Victor records—are great performances; but if one listens after them to the 1941 Schubert Ninth, the 1940 Verdi *Requiem* and Beethoven *Missa*, one discovers that these are even greater. And it is here that one encounters the failure to use our technology as it might be used. One can listen to the 1941 Schubert Ninth after the 1953 performance because it too is on a Victor record; but one cannot listen to the 1940 *Requiem* and *Missa* on the NBC records of the broadcasts; nor can one listen to the 1938 Haydn No. 98 on the NBC record that is superior to the 1945 performance Victor recorded, or the 1938 Strauss *Don Quixote* on the NBC record that is superior to the 1953 performance Victor issued, or the 1941 Haydn No. 99 on the NBC record that is even finer than the 1949 performance Victor issued last spring. And my contention is that

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in addition to what is available on Victor records there should be made available in another way all that is on the NBC records. That is, for the same reason that the series of Toscanini's concerts with the NBC Symphony from 1937 to 1954 was broadcast originally, it should be rebroadcast now—which would accomplish for the achievements of this great performer of music what a museum does for the achievements of a great painter. Station WRVR in New York, a few years ago, began to do this very thing, but stopped after it had rebroadcast the first two NBC Symphony seasons. It would seem to be a project for NBC itself to undertake; but evidently it doesn't seem so to NBC. And the result is that the Toscanini performances which our technology preserved might as well have been given a hundred years ago when there was no technology to preserve them, as far as their being heard again today is concerned.

NBC, WHICH ISN'T interested in rebroadcasting Toscanini's broadcasts, is as little interested in rebroadcasting Cantelli's; and CBS presumably has a similar lack of interest in rebroadcasting his New York Philharmonic broadcasts. Indeed they didn't care enough about Cantelli's broadcasts to hold on to the tapes, and handed them over to Walter Toscanini, who in turn didn't keep them with the collection of his father's broadcasts in Riverdale, but presented them to the Historical Sound Recordings Program at Yale University Library. The possible reasons I can think of for this action include a belief by Mr. Toscanini that one of the several record archives at large university libraries and at the Library of Congress was the right place for the Cantelli tapes. But in fact these archives at libraries are the wrong places for material like the Cantelli tapes; because they regard and handle it as they do manuscripts and early editions of literature and music—which is to say, as reference material for scholars or performers to examine in connection with a piece of scholarly writing or a performance. That is the right way to handle a manuscript or an early edition of a poem or a symphony: the general public is content with available printed editions, and only a scholar or a conductor has any need of examining the manuscript or early edition. But it is not the right way to handle the recordings at the Library of Congress—which include Toscanini's performances of operas in Salzburg in 1937, the Budapest Quartet's performances at the Library in the early '40s, the New Music Quartet's performances there during its brief lifetime—or those of Cantelli's performances at Yale University Library, which are not materials of scholarship that are of interest to scholars, but instead preserve the original unique works of art produced by great performers that are of purely aesthetic interest to music-lovers, non-professional as well as professional, as something to hear. To keep them stored away as they are at the Library of Congress and Yale University Library and other university libraries, and to allow this one or that one to be heard now and then only by the occasional conductor or critic, is as wrong a way to deal with them as it would be for a museum to deal with a gift of Cézanne paintings. The museum would regard the Cézannes as things for the public to see; and the Library of Congress and Yale University Library should regard the recorded performances as things for the public to hear. If they cannot make the performances available to the public themselves, they should work for the setting up of an organization to do it for them —to do with great musical performances of the past what the museum does with great paintings.

There is at the Library and Museum of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center in New York the Toscanini Memorial Archives, which has microfilm copies of autograph scores and early editions scattered all over the world, and which offers "cooperating libraries opportunities for microfilm exchange of manuscript and other rare materials that may not otherwise be available to them." This suggests the possibility of a similar copying and exchange of the recordings of performances for the purpose of having them heard by the public, both in listening rooms and in broadcasts. The copying and exchange and distribution would be done by an organization set up for the purpose, which would work out—with the owners and custodians of the recordings, with living musicians and the heirs of dead ones, with orchestra managements and the musicians' union, with broadcasting stations—the arrangements that would make it possible for the performances of Toscanini, Cantelli, the Budapest Quartet in its prime, the New Music Quartet, and others like them to be kept on view as great paintings of the past are in museums.

B. H. HAGGIN *is the eminent music critic. His two most recent works,* The New Listener's Companion and Record Guide *and* The Toscanini Musicians Knew, *were reviewed in our November 1967 issue by Seymour Rudin.*

* * *

OLD FRIENDS

John Thompson

FEW EVENTS, save perhaps the absorption of one very good stiff drink, can make us feel so benign, so blessed and so willing to bless, as settling-in again for an evening with an old friend who's been away for a time. After the first nervous words and the sidelong observations of time's ravages, whole worlds come back; we mutually forgive and forget one another's whorings after the new, who suddenly don't count at all: too ignorant, too unconnected, too young. What does it matter if we haven't kept up, haven't written; it's those things of years ago that count, those things that happened when things really did count. In those years people established themselves in that small pantheon of humanity which is the only genuine one we can have. The others who come later are only simulacra. Why, our old friends knew us when we were actually young ourselves; they actually knew our parents, our many abandoned hearths, they rode in our old forgotten automobiles to strange places that don't even exist anymore; they knew our lost loves. They knew our other friends. Only with an old friend can we really

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talk about our other old friends, about their failures and successes, their old follies and their new compromises. And nothing strange can have as much meaning as does news of the recent and yet anciently characteristic acts of our friends. And so, blessed and willing to bless, we catch up.

As you see, I have fallen into a version of the familiar essay, like some old Bookman among his cherished Volumes. (I know I lack the furniture; a proper familiar essay would have more homely detail, more space, a tea cosy, and plenty of comfortable footstools.) But that is how I feel, for I have just realized that the novels I want to discuss this month* all fall into this category. I have read many books by each of these four writers, but for the last few years I have been unfaithful, totally ignorant of some of the works that I now see in the proud lists conveniently printed on the verso of the half-title in these new books; guilty of deliberately ignoring others; and still others, worst of all, I have left standing unopened on the shelves. But we need not be scholars of our old friends or of our old authors, there is no obligation to keep up with every single thing they do. So I warn you, I am feeling benign, gossipy, and in no mood to attack fiercely or fiercely to defend. We need never do either with proven friends.

The Nice and the Good is Iris Murdoch's eleventh novel. We've been out of touch, I haven't read the last two or three; but I felt right at home with this one, from page one all the way to the end. She is still up to all the old tricks of the novelist's trade, with her own special trickiness. Of plot, Iris Murdoch makes a good joke, of character something not quite a joke, of setting, something real. London, I take it, is London, the year is now, and this is what happens there but not really.

So it was with the best of her other novels. The plots were complicated, full of reversals and consequences and recognitions, the characters were like those we must imagine behind the mysterious events reported in newspapers. And yet not quite. In *The Flight From the Enchanter*, the mysterious Mischa Fox really was mysterious, he was always on the verge of magic. Her characters possessed the ability of characters in myths or fairy tales to charm one another, and to charm probably the reader as well; it worked, I thought, because this charm represented something like the aura that people really have for us as they gather to themselves, however temporarily, all the feelings we have about the key figures of life wherever we find them. If sometimes the characters in *The Flight From the Enchanter* seemed in danger of becoming symbolic, mere counters in a set of ideas, one could dodge a conclusion at last because it seemed there would be too much trouble in working it all out. And the characters didn't wear tags, and their strange actions were more like magic than like symbolism, that is, they were marvelous and irrelevant rather than hopelessly and endlessly suitable. I remember that book now as it was when I read it, full of fantastic, sinister, luminous but unilluminating set-pieces of drama: Rosa in bed with both the two strange brothers and a sort of blinding explosion goes off in the air; Rosa suddenly smashes the great fish tank at Mischa's party, in that place of his with the secret insides carved out of four adjoining Kensington houses; the wise man gone mad sitting in his room which is plastered all over except for the ceiling with papers and books and pictures and statues, trying to decipher an undecipherable ancient script. . . . Even though everything might be explained, as the story developed, the actions and scenes retained their power of strangeness.

So I FELT reading *The Nice and the Good*, and so I had felt, some years ago, reading *A Severed Head*, with its rich, intelligent hero, its mysterious "tawny-breasted witch" who with a two-handed Samurai sword can clip in half a linen napkin tossed in the air, who magically changes people's lives; in fact, exactly in so many words, I wrote about Iris Murdoch some years ago, and I see no reason now to change the words. London is London still, but the London of today, again with echoes of newspaper scandals, sex, and the "security" risk of a government office; there is another example of the new young, of the old and wise, of the sexually gifted and the perverted, and really odd charmers like a sort of Hobbit who's a native dialect-speaker of any place you want him to be from; and again, strange powers move through the air around people, auras of good, auras of evil. Lurking in the minds of the wise are oracular suggestions of something like a system of thought, which begins as home-made psychology and morality and ends as a preposterously optimistic mixture of home-made psychology and mysticism.

> What Ducane was experiencing, in this form peculiar to him of imagining himself as a judge, was, though this was not entirely clear in his mind, one of the great paradoxes of morality, namely, that in order to become good it may be necessary to imagine oneself good, and yet much imagining may also be the very thing which renders improvement impossible, either because of surreptitious complacency or because of some deeper blasphemous infection which is set up when goodness is thought about in the wrong way. To become good it may be necessary to think about virtue, although unreflective simple people may achieve a thoughtless excellence.
>
> There are mysterious agencies of the human mind which, like roving gases, travel the world, causing pain and mutilation, without their owners' having any full awareness, or even any awareness at all, of the strength and the whereabouts of these exhalations.
>
> What can I say to him? That one must soon forget one's sins in the claims of others. But how to forget. The point is that nothing matters except loving what is good. Not to look at evil but to look at good. Only this contemplation breaks the tyranny of the

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* Iris Murdoch, *The Nice and the Good*, Viking, 378 pp., $5.75.
Angus Wilson, *No Laughing Matter*, Viking, 496 pp., $6.95.
William Golding, *The Pyramid*, Harcourt, Brace & World, 183 pp., $4.50.
John O'Hara, *The Instrument*, Random House, 297 pp., $5.95.

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past, breaks the adherence of evil to the personality, breaks, in the end, the personality itself. In the light of the good, evil can be seen in its place, not owned, just existing, in its place. Could he explain all this to Willy? He would have to try.

The story itself, as usual in Iris Murdoch's books, is too complicated to recite. It takes place in London, in offices, in the houses of the rich and of the poor, in an evil "vault," and in one of those English country houses equipped, like all of those thousands of houses, with eccentric and glamorous parents, a quaint dialect-type (Cockney or country) servant, erotic visitors, and children who speak like the characters in Ivy Compton-Burnett's novels in bright prattlings of altogether preternatural insight, aggression, and grammar. There is a set-piece for each occasion, including a very near thing in a horrid tide-drowned grotto, a blackmailing, many sudden encounters with seductive women, sometimes deliciously naked, a learned allegory of love mixed up with Bronzino's famous London allegory of Cupid, Venus, Folly, and Time (with borrowings from Panofsky), lots of misunderstandings, terrible tensions of very near things between lovers; and in the end each pair is sorted out and more than suitably bedded down together—the rake, the virgin, the widow, the whore, the impotent, all of them.

You may, if you like, want to make something of it. I am content with what Iris Murdoch has made of it all. We do not ask our old friends to explain themselves, nor need we really bother to explain them to others, as we do not, when we send a note of introduction from one friend to another, include comments on the bearer's character.

Should you not already know Iris Murdoch, and if she sounds at all like your sort of thing, then look up *The Nice and the Good.* Its first sentence is this: "A head of department, working quietly in his room in Whitehall on a summer afternoon, is not accustomed to being disturbed by the near-by and indubitable sound of a revolver shot."

ONE OF THOSE English houses equipped, like all of those thousands of houses, with eccentric and glamorous parents, a quaint dialect-type servant (cockney or country), erotic visitors, and children who speak like the characters in Ivy Compton-Burnett's novels, in bright prattlings of altogether preternatural insight, aggression, and grammar. (Old friends tend to resemble one another, and inevitably they repeat themselves; do we mind?) In Angus Wilson's house the people even refer, from time to time, to *Peter Pan* and the household of Mr. and Mrs. Darling which all big English houses of course much resemble. *No Laughing Matter* is, like *The Nice and the Good,* a very witty comic novel. On the whole the wit is not so harsh as that of Wilson's first two or three books, somewhat alloyed as it is here with the much more long-winded and sympathetic voice of his bigger and later novels, the most recent of which, again, I have missed out on. *No Laughing Matter* is a family chronicle, with a printed list of the cast divided into Principal Players, Supporting Roles, and Additional Cast. The five Books of the novel are dated for our convenience: Before the War; 1919; 1925, 1935, 1937-1938; 1946, 1956; and 1967. The Principal Players are the six Matthews children, three boys, three girls. In 1912, the eldest, Quentin, is fifteen, the youngest, Marcus, is eight. Their parents, struggling and cadging to remain middle class, are "Billy Pop," a failing writer, and the "Countess," a dashing beauty who will soon run through all her opportunities for promiscuity.

The first Book of the novel is a virtuoso performance by the author, puzzling, even dazzling to the reader in many ways. First, the flourishes of its style, from playfulness to eloquence to the bitterness of cruel dialogue may be disturbing. The boldness of the figure that the author dares to use as his presentation of a sense of family unity is rather dazzling in itself. The family has just been to a Wild West Show in London, 1912, and as they stroll homeward to Kensington they experience a kind of collective fantasy of themselves crossing the great American Desert in a covered wagon: Grandmother, Great Aunt, Father, Mother, and each of the six children, involved in a "primitive dream that for some minutes gave to that volatile, edged, and edgy family a union of happy, carefree intimacy that it had scarcely known before and never knew again." Furthermore, although the reader is scarcely able to sort out the parts of their dream at the time of the first reading, each of their private fantasies, as it unrolls, is for each of them like a dream of his own character and thus of his own fate; and each of these dreams is brought down to earth by the sudden puncturing of the dreams of Father (Billy Pop) and Mother (the Countess), who then proceed to destroy the collective dream and to shoot down the children one by one with sadistic accuracy. It is a fantasia of ingenuity in introduction, exposition, and analysis; an exuberance of literary imagination; and it presents a long foreshadowing darkly, cruelly cast, of the fifty-five years to come.

The flourishes, the invention,

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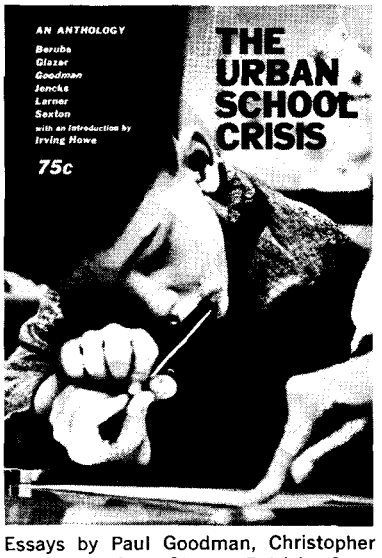

Essays by Paul Goodman, Christopher Jencks, Nathan Glazer, Patricia Cayo Sexton, Jeremy Larner and Maurice R. Berube. Introduction by Irving Howe.

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the constant voluntary embellishments of standard novelist's scenes go on through the book, never tiring, never ceasing to be witty in themselves as devices and witty in substance, and dark in purpose. The Principal Players live on through the Great War, through the 20's when they come to maturity, through the 30's of political turmoil, through the Second World War, and on to 1967, when, of course, they are old men and old women.

Quentin, who in 1912 was fifteen and had been exiled from the Matthews's scruffy house to Grandmother's, is wounded in France, becomes a socialist, a leading political journalist, anti-Fascist and then, because he will not pretend that he does not miss his friends and acquaintances who have disappeared in Stalin's Russia, and will not deny what he has seen in Spain, he becomes a premature anti-Communist. At the age of seventy he is a bitter, exhibitionistic, Muggeridge-like television figure, damning not both your houses but every house in sight. One of the daughters, Margaret, becomes first a brilliant writer of catty short stories (about the family), then a great literary figure, finally a rather forgotten old writer. Sukey and Gladys, dear and rather silly girls, in their different ways, accomplish their fates through love. Rupert, the beautiful Countess's beautiful favorite, becomes a very successful actor, then at last a less successful one. The best end is made by Marcus, the youngest. Disappointed by Billy Pop, and cruelly hazed by the Princess, he becomes a homosexual with a genius for understanding painting. With his rich lover's money, he makes them both a fortune out of art, and after a series of adventures in which he always comes out right, for no reason except his good instincts and his intelligence, he ends up in North Africa with some of the brothers and sisters around him, and with a grandchild visiting along with a flock of the strange new young of 1967; and he is a good man. His spirit is good—as we can see because the young understand and like him. And he has done good works. He has established a non-profit perfume factory, simply because so many were unemployed in his town, a factory his Berber former lover and soon-to-be beneficiary heartily wishes to model after those more energetic and less philanthropic enterprises he reads about in his favorite journal, *Time* magazine.

THE GROUND of all this seems really England, as does the setting of Iris Murdoch's novel. The movement of the story through our modern eras in one carefully evocative scene after another cannot fail to suggest to us that this is more than the chronicle of one family. Do not Billy Pop and the Countess represent the strangely charming and potent swank of the old privileged orders, and their gifts of crippled brilliance to the 20th century? But then, a leading political analyst, a leading actor, a leading writer, a leading impresario of art all in one family—are these representative figures? Something in the author's manner itself seems to tell us to go no further. The story is almost such a chronicle. But would a proper representative chronicle include jokes on itself? In one episode, put in the form of a play, the characters turn Pirandello on us.

> ALL TOGETHER: Whatever do *you* know about Bernard Shaw, Regan?
> REGAN [The dialect-type servant]: Nix me dolly. But them's the lines I was given.
> QUENTIN: *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism.* I ought to know that title. When was it published? (*He turns to title page*). Nineteen-twenty-eight! . . . but, that's not for three years yet. It must be some mistake.

So the novelist's time is not real time, his carefully re-created eras are not to be mistaken for real eras, his family chronicle is not the same as a Chronicle. Thank you, dear friend, for not being too solemn. How well our old friends know that there's a sort of joke behind it all, and a joke we don't have to explain to one another—don't even have to tell, after all these years.

WILLIAM GOLDING, trailing clouds of glory, sometime with *Lord of*

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the Flies the Freshman's vademecum and sole rival to *Catcher in the Rye,* old mystifier of *Pincher Martin,* and, in *The Inheritors,* the only writer who has ever really tried to imagine, really and truly, what that paleolithic Eden was that we had before we acquired language and became our clever and dreadful human selves. *Free Fall* I read and have quite forgotten, *The Spire* got past me. *The Pyramid* is in real England, modern England, from the 30's to the 60's. The place is a village, no great country house. The hero, Oliver, who grows from boyhood to middle age, is only the son of a dispensing chemist, but he gets to Oxford. The characters are local eccentrics, there are no members of the great world. Oliver loves a girl from a class above his own, seduces a girl from a class below his own; participates in a slapstick farce of a local Little Theater production, invincibly innocent and naive through all this, at eighteen; returns as a middle-aged man driving an impressive automobile, and remembers in detail his old music teacher, an eccentric lonely lady who loved an auto mechanic she allowed to prosper. She went mad once, walking out naked into the town to his garage. Then she got well again, and later she died. The place is called Stilbourne. Archly offstage, and why it is then I cannot imagine, is Trollope's cathedral town of Barchester. William Golding is eloquent but uncommunicative here. I have not quite got on the old footing with him. Title and dust jacket suggest Ideas about the Pyramid of Life. Our old friend is full of something but we will have to take another evening or two before we find out what it is.

JOHN O'HARA IS O'Hara still, for about the thirtieth time. Long ago I lost track of how many O'Hara books I have read. *The Instrument* is about a young playwright, Yank Lucas, and how he drives to fame and fortune over the bodies—sometimes the dead bodies—of his women. There are scenes in cheap rooming houses, in luxury apartments, in theaters and theatrical offices, in country boarding houses and country mansions; in many many bedrooms. Most of the story is, in dialogue, the famous O'Hara dialogue. The tough lady literary agent to the hero, about the photographs on her wall:

> "They weren't all lovers of mine but I loved them all, and I think you belong up there. You'd be the first new face in ten years. Look at those collars and ties. How did they ever breathe?"
> "Heavily, some of them I gather."
> "You son of a bitch. You're so right," she said.

The classy rich lady, one of our old O'Hara friends, also speaks to Yank about her emotional career, as do so freely most O'Hara people.

> "Then you see why you're wrong about me, Yank. At my age, after about thirty-five years of an active sex life, most of it but not all of it with two husbands, I have to have more than the quick lay." . . .

Sex, money, fame, society, and sex; it is wonderful how O'Hara has kept up his old interest in these things. Even these come in, however briefly: the obligatory reference to college fraternities; the know-how of motels, newspaper offices; the way a headwaiter works as arbiter of distinction. O'Hara's people have taken over an entire landscape, right down to the newest kind of college girl. They have all read his books and know their lines and know exactly what is expected of them. If you have liked them before there is no reason why you should not like them again.

I have said that no decent fellow would include in his note of introduction a comment on his old friend's character—and yet, being a cad at last, I must say this. Never have novelists been so skilled, so incredibly proficient, never so decent, never so—so unconvincing. Therefore I do not think I need warn you against letting them bring their trunks in with them, or against letting them cash their checks on the credit of your bank account. You'll have seen that they're engaged in some marvelous game of their own, an entertaining game at very small expense to you, and if you're an addict of novels, it's all very cheap at the price. Otherwise, if you are very earnest, if you ask too much, if you demand more of a view of the world than that given eloquently by these experienced, ever so experienced, old and wise friends, then these things are not at all for you. If you decide that they are not for you, then it would take too long to say why, but you would be the poorer for this decision.

JOHN THOMPSON *reviews fiction regularly in these pages.*

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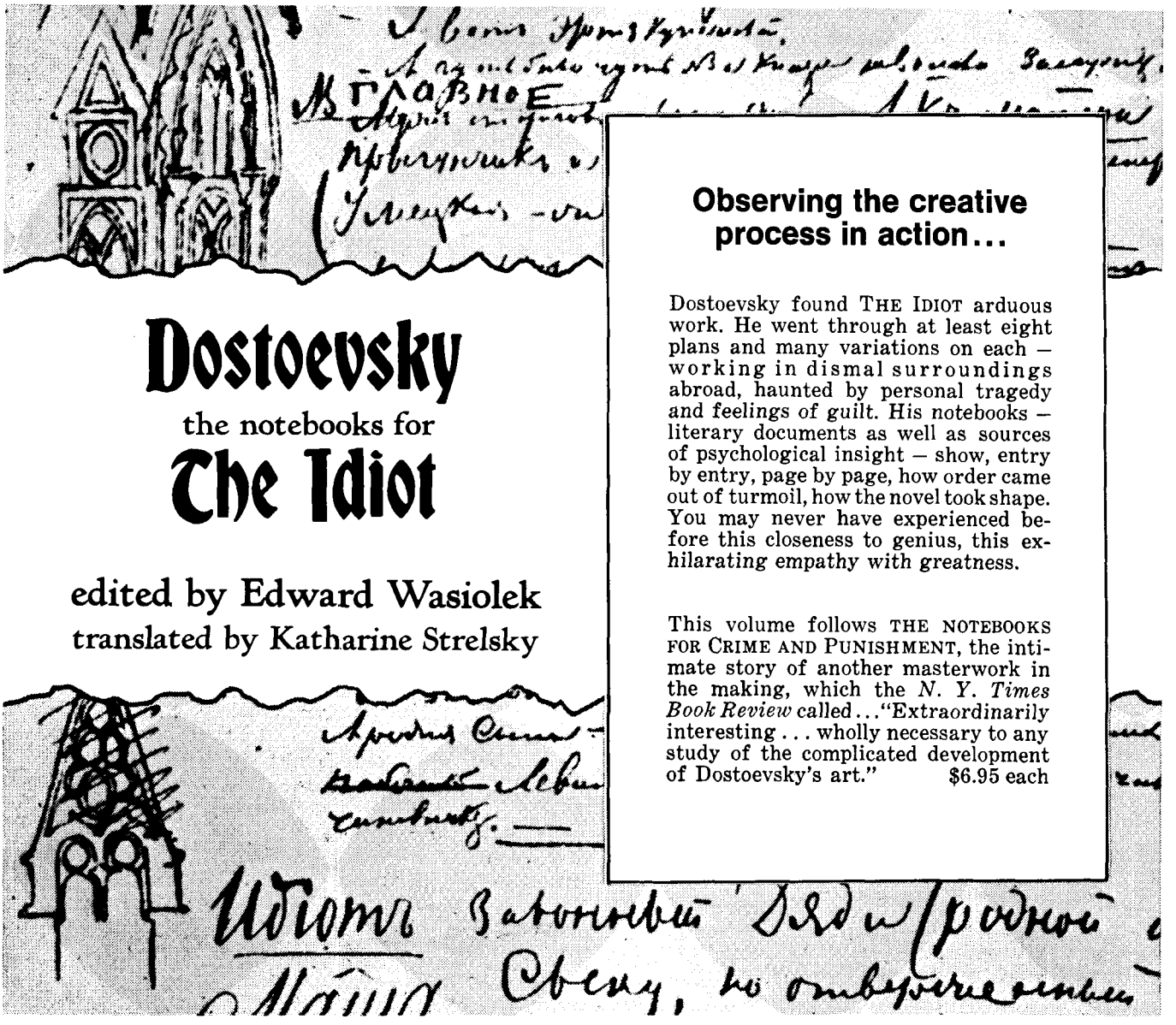

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SCHOOLDAYS

36 CHILDREN. By HERBERT KOHL. *New American Library. 256 pp. $5.50.*

DEATH AT AN EARLY AGE. By JONATHAN KOZOL. *Houghton Mifflin. 240 pp. $4.95.*

Reviewed by PETER SCHRAG

FIRSTHAND RFPORTS from the classrooms of the inner city are fast becoming a new literary genre in America: The writer is a teacher or—more commonly—an ex-teacher, and the characters are tough but (usually) sympathetic kids, callous administrators, and a collection of fearful school types spouting hate through their pieties and educational nonsense through their apathy. The writer-protagonist is part anthropologist fascinated by the ghetto, part muckraking journalist, and part teacher struggling manfully to work with the children placed in his care. Ultimately he quits or is fired for being too successful, innovative, or defiant.

Some of this literature leans toward creeping sentimentality—a black for white reversal of the standard *Blackboard Jungle* tale—in which the zip-gun-toting hoods are invested with the souls of poets and the embattled teachers are transformed into sadistic racists. But a great deal of it also goes to the heart of the failures of urban education, leaving the wreckage of old clichés in its wake. Being journalistic and personal, it strikes where educational theorists fear to tread and the generalities of sociological polemicism shed no light. Books like *The Schoolchildren** by Orletta Ryan and Mary Frances Greene, and, more recently, Jonathan Kozol's *Death at an Early Age,* and Herbert Kohl's *36 Children,* do for the turgid literature of education what Ida Tarbell and Lincoln Steffens did to the conventional political and economic texts of the progressive age: they describe the system, not as it's supposed to function, but as it does, and they portray children as individual human beings, not as cases for the guidance counsellor. At their worst, these writers can be excruciatingly gothic; at their best, they are forcing, for the first time, a real confrontation with the abiding problems of the urban schools. Ultimately, all their statements are questions to which neither they, nor anyone else, have any substantial answers.

Kohl and Kozol have been traveling parallel paths to similar ends. Classmates at Harvard, and still good friends, they independently became earnest pilgrims in the ghetto schools, Kohl in Harlem, Kozol in Boston's Roxbury. Kozol lasted a year minus a week as a temporary teacher before he was fired, in a local *cause célèbre,* for reading Langston Hughes's poem *Ballad of the Landlord* to his fourth-grade class, and for other unspecified transgressions. The poem was not on the approved syllabus, and it threatened the polite hypocrisy of the school establishment. Undoubtedly Kozol's personal concern, his commitment to his pupils, was highly offensive to his colleagues and superiors. Kohl survived two years, then quit in desperation because his successes in a sixth-grade class were frustrated and destroyed by the cynicism and disregard of others in the system.

Of the two books, Kozol's is far more personal, more passionate, and therefore less comprehensive. It is a story of teachers who derive pleasure from beating children with a rattan in the school basement, of classes conducted—in competition with the noise of several others—in the corner of an ugly school auditorium, of the subtle racism of school administrators and elected school committee officials, and of one man's odyssey through the terrors of a system where dedication means destruction and where personal and cultural originality are regarded as works of the devil. ("We have no inferior education in our schools," said a member of the School Committee. "What we have been getting is an inferior type of student.") Essentially, Kozol's work is a simple, desperate document, almost a fragment, the message of a survivor that washes up on a distant shore:

> No child in the ruined Fourth Grade at my school can ever have that terrible year returned to him. No boy whipped for society's, not his, wrong is ever likely again to have his whole sense of dignity returned. No young man made to lie and apologize for something he did not do in order to avoid a greater punishment can ever be graced again with the gift of belief in a world or society in which authorities are just. And who in the slow calendar of days in which "things are changing" will find a way, after that change, to give back to the boys at that discipline school the lives that have been taken from them by the Boston Public Schools?

And yet, while Kozol knows what happened to him and the children about whom he cared so much, while he understands that the discipline cases, and the resulting psychological cripples, were the creatures of the system, he offers little understanding of why they occurred. Kozol portrays his own experiences against the lofty professions of the School Committee, and almost every page is charged with the irony of the differences. There are statistics and recitations of failure, comparisons of funds spent in Boston's Negro and white schools, descriptions of textbook platitudes and their gratuitous insults to Negro children, and unbelievable vignettes of the ignorance and parochialism of teachers. But despite all these things—Kozol's effective descriptions of the sad characters on the School Committee who upheld his dismissal, and of the school with its collapsing windows and peeling paint—the book often has the tone of an allegory where Hate, Fear, Hypocrisy, and Racism are the chief enemies. The political and social complexities that created this system, the very fact that all this is presumably the consequence of a democratic process, fades into the background. The

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political appeal of Irish politicians with their lace curtain pieties, the well meaning middle-class Yankees and Jews who fled to the suburbs and, until recently, disregarded the urban mess, the political and civil-service machinery that festers decay and disregard—all these things are overlooked. The strength of the book is in its uncomplicated emotional impact; its weakness is that it offers neither political nor pedagogical light. Finally, and ironically, it may simply reinforce the polarized hates and fears it so vividly describes, without providing a handle for their mitigation. Now we will know even better why we moved to the suburbs (where Kozol has become a successful teacher), why we detest Louise Day Hicks, the woman who parlayed the neighborhood school ritual into a serious candidacy for mayor of Boston, and why the urban schools are doomed. Kozol has written a powerful book, and he himself is a thoughtful, warm individual. Yet both author and book are indications that Good Intentions alone will not prevail. The "dedicated teacher" has become the rhetorical battlecry of the Boston system, but politics is the name of the game. Kozol's genuine dedication is rare, and therefore it is not enough.

KOHL'S BOOK, written in a lower key, is a more complex story of a successful effort to meet the academic and pedagogical challenge of reaching children often considered hopeless; where Kozol is concerned with his pupils' physical and psychic scars, Kohl is primarily interested in intellectual and personal relevance, in how youngsters from the Harlem ghetto can be taught effectively. During the course of his two-year hitch in the classroom, author-teacher Kohl scrapped most of the standard approaches of the curriculum manuals (partly through necessity, since textbooks weren't available), taught the children fables, listened to their stories and records, and got them to a point where they were writing their own literature. Many of these classroom productions—usually in the form of epic "novels"—are heavily loaded with the children's projections of good and evil, and with imaginative constructions drawn from lives that can be unbelievably rich, despite the misery that surrounds them. Since Kohl gave the kids a large dose of classical mythology, their stories—many of them reproduced in the book—are populated by a cast of heroes who are part Roman or Greek god, part Robin Hood, and part hipster (perhaps the first profiles of the dream life of a Black militant):

> The Slave was very smart. Soon he found out about the king. The Slave told his friends. Soon Everyone was talking about it. The people were mad they threw him out. Then the Slave took the leaders place. He ruled good and wisely. For the king he was put to a task of rolling rocks (huge rocks) on a mountain that erupts. The Slave set all Slaves free and gave them money and land.

Nearly half the book is filled with the writing and drawings of children—little sketches of filthy streets and addicts, dreams of great achievement, ghetto versions of Oresteian tragedy—all testimonials that the "unteachable" can be taught, that they can produce unexpectedly rich poems and stories, and that the conventional assumptions about "disadvantages" are often nothing more than the confessions of incompetent teachers. (I suspect that Kohl also included the stories as a final act of educational encouragement to the writers.) Kohl, like Kozol, accepted and rewarded work that shocked others in the system: Children are not supposed to know about junkies or brutality, and their stories—if they write them at all—are usually forced into the saccharine tone of Dick and Jane. By encouraging work based on the children's lives, and by seeing the kids as people, Kohl was able to convert their undisciplined curiosity and projections into coherent and often structured learning. From street language, he moved them to discussions about the origins of words, and the correct way of expressing oneself:

> The emphasis on language and words opened the children to the whole process of verbal communication. Things that they had been struggling to express, or worse, had felt only they in their isolation thought about, became social, shareable. Speak-

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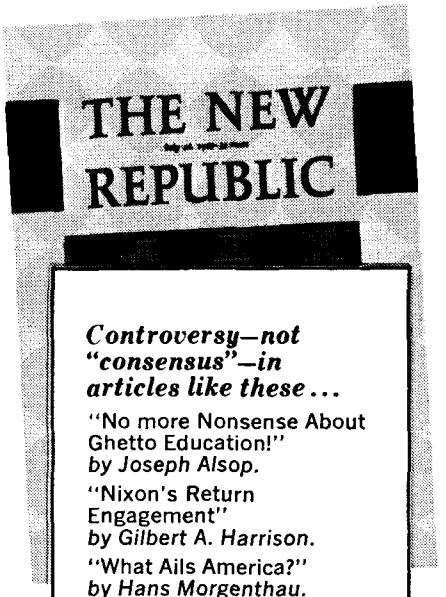

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> ing of things, of inferiority and ambiguity, of irony and obsession, brought relief, and perhaps for the first time gave the children a sense that there were meaningful human creations that one could discover in a classroom.

Slowly during his first year Kohl learned that "the lessons were secondary. Everything important happening in the classroom happened between lessons." He also learned that the kids' classroom failures were his failures, and that frequently the children's offenses in school were only reflections of his own terror.

Although Kohl tends at times to be romantic about his pupils and about the work they produced (much of it, after all, isn't great literature), he proves his point: success in a ghetto classroom is not determined by the literary distinction of its productions, but by what children do and learn, and clearly Kohl's children wrote a great deal, became fascinated with words and stories, and often developed an unbounded curiosity about their lives, about books, and about all the things that should matter to a civilized human being. They began to discover, in brief, the value of learning, the idea that education is power, that the man of wisdom can command spirits.

AND YET, what we are witnessing here—what Kohl did in the classroom—is really the production of a work of art. As a teacher he was able to do what a million other teachers cannot, and it is this fact that limited Kohl's own effectiveness and that led him to quit the classroom. (He is now at Columbia Teachers College writing materials for ghetto classes.) Most of the children he was able to turn on were quickly turned off by other teachers and other situations. Some of them were left in a limbo between two worlds. One who is now on her way to becoming a highly proficient mathematician has become a moral and social neuter; several others dropped out of school, while a few more are treading an uncertain line between life in the official world of school, ambition, and success, and the underworld of the streets.

This is what makes the book, and others like it, important and frustrating at the same time. It proves that the ghetto school is not totally without hope, but like Kozol's it also seems to demonstrate that few people can make it anything more than a desperate holding operation that destroys children with a blind and ruthless efficiency. Other than the example of his own work, Kohl offers no pedagogical theory. Moreover, he does not, and cannot, provide prescriptions for the integration of the two worlds that he managed to straddle and bring together for a brief moment. The very success of his work and the very existence of the book are premised on the difficulty of that resolution. The problem is not merely in finding or training other teachers to be able to do what Kohl and Kozol have managed, but in integrating two cultures—rich and poor, white and black—each of which partly defines itself through exclusion of the other. The traditional school program, now demonstrably a failure, was premised on the belief that all children aspired to the comfortable middle class, that they all wanted to become little executives or professionals, and that, ultimately, the culture of the ghetto was no culture at all and would disappear. Clearly, this is what underlay Kozol's dismissal in Boston. The disasters that grew from these assumptions suggest that alchemy is no more feasible in converting cultures than it is in metallurgy. If it is no longer possible to say that *they* should be like us, are we then willing to accept the idea that we should become a little more like them? The American educational system, advertised as the route to opportunity, also operates to select people out: the more important it becomes as an avenue of entry, the more important also are its functions of denial and rejection. As it becomes the prime asset and legacy of the advantaged, will the disadvantaged ever be allowed genuine parity?

The large urban school systems are visibly crumbling under the weight of teacher strikes, community action groups, and their own hierarchical rigidity. Decentralization, considered absurd a few years ago, is now coming into fashion. And yet, decentralization itself is really nothing more than an admission of educational failure and a recognition of our pedagogical bankruptcy. Ultimately, community control over the ghetto schools and black political power may generate a new kind of educational motivation. Perhaps if the parents are in charge, they will insist on more people like Kozol and Kohl and on more concern for children. Ultimately, urban politics—real ward politics—and community action, rather than the traditional urban classroom, may well be our greatest educational resource and the most effective device for achieving social mobility. But until that happens, decentralization will continue to institutionalize the two worlds, and the bridges will be that much harder to build. When they are built, they will, hopefully, accommodate two-way traffic.

MOST LIKELY TO SUCCEED

NORTH TOWARD HOME. By WILLIE MORRIS. *Houghton Mifflin. 438 pp. $5.95.*

Reviewed by JOSEPH EPSTEIN

FEW WRITERS seem so readily likable as Willie Morris. For openers, there is that first name: Willie—a locker-room name, homely, charged with boyish mischievousness, nothing if not congenial. "Hey Willie," it almost seems to invite one to call out, "how's it goin'?" As is fairly well known, things are goin' just fine for Morris. At thirty-two, he is the eighth and youngest editor-in-chief of *Harper's,* and *North Toward Home,* an autobiography written under a Houghton Mifflin Literary Fellowship, will certainly add to its author's renown. Early success tends to repel those to whom success comes hard and late or not at all—which is to say that it tends to repel the majority—but in Willie Morris's case it seems suitable and even agreeable. Why should this be so? The reasons, or at least a good many of them, are to be found in his book.

The first thing one notices in reading *North Toward Home* is how amiably Morris combines Northern values and Southern manners. In today's America, man-

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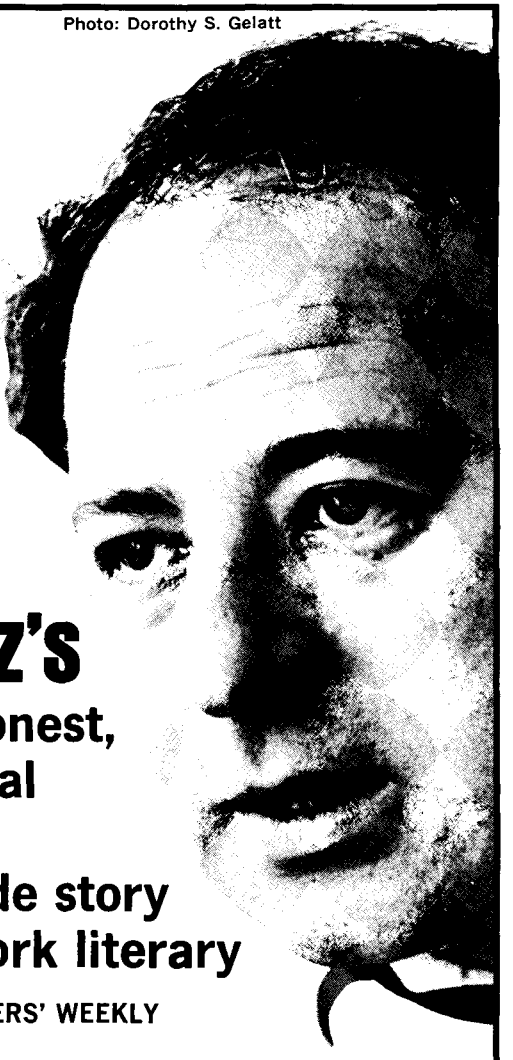
ners in writing are not discussed much, perhaps because they are so little in evidence. By manners I do not mean gentility, but rather an abiding sense of fairness toward one's subject-matter and a distaste both for destructive contempt and easy glibness. In connection with writing, then, manners are the values of decency translated into prose. I have called them Southern manners because it is preeminently the white Southerners among contemporary writers who possess them most strikingly. Robert Penn Warren has them in abundance, as do C. Vann Woodward, William Styron, Walker Percy—and Willie Morris.

Morris also possesses that rarer literary gift, a voice of his own. On one level, this simply means that he has a unique style. On a deeper level, however, the achievement of a voice of one's own signifies that a writer has succeeded in stripping away all artificiality from his prose, that he has mastered the various techniques of writing, and that he understands himself well enough to be able to surmount the usual barriers between writer and reader.

While wholly his own, Morris's voice is also distinctly American. It could hardly be anything else and still be genuine, since Morris was born in Yazoo City, Mississippi, and for the most part educated there and in Texas. One can also detect in the voice a good measure of the tone and temper of that group of Americans who went to college in the middle 50's and thus came of age during the Eisenhower administration. Being a member of that group myself, I share in Morris's first person plural when he writes: "The later, more activist liberals and radicals would say we were a 'vanished' generation, too much the children of the pervasive affluence and smugness of our silent coming to maturity to engage ourselves in social struggles that genuinely mattered—'children of the children' of the Depression, whose parents after their early deprivations had sought materialistic comfort as a first prerogative and as a matter of course, and who had given to us, their offspring, the easy comforts and securities they themselves had achieved with such difficulty."

Photo: Dorothy S. Gelatt



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It was not the best of times in which to grow up. Unlike those born ten or so years earlier, people of roughly Morris's age are too young to remember the Depression, let alone to have had their characters shaped by it in any way, and unlike those born five or ten years later, they came too late for an activist role in the civil-rights movement. To put it another way, Paul Goodman's *Growing Up Absurd* could stand as the group's biography, except that by the time it appeared they had already grown up. For most, the benevolent smile of The Great Golfer meant the death of idealism. The majority plunged into business or the professions without the least trace of regret. Those who didn't, by some freak of luck, got by almost solely on the sheer strength of humor and skepticism. Not surprisingly, therefore, skeptical humor abounds in Willie Morris, who can write about his mother's ancestors: "They were courageous under tension and unexpectedly tough beneath their wild eccentricities, for they had a close working agreement with God. They also had an unusually high quota in bullshit."

NORTH TOWARD HOME is divided into three large sections, dealing, respectively, with Morris's upbringing in Yazoo City; his undergraduate education at the University of Texas and later his editorship of *The Texas Observer*; and finally his days in New York, the city he calls "The Cave." As an "autobiography in mid-passage," the book records not only a journey toward the home Morris found in New York but also one toward self-understanding, and like all such journeys, it first of all involves a trip back into the past.

There have been more painful journeys. As exceptional as the turns in his adult life have been, just that unexceptional was Morris's boyhood in Mississippi. Far from exhibiting the typical portrait of the writer as a young man —sensitive as a sliver, precocious as a quiz kid—Morris's chronicle of his early life is that of a boy who not only got along but by all accounts was a positive winner in Yazoo City's own terms. His relationship with his parents seems to have been altogether solid and, as such things go, relatively uncomplicated. A good athlete and a practical joker on the grand scale, he nevertheless was valedictorian of his high-school class, and what is known in the South as one of "the good ole boys." To gain some idea of the status of Morris's intellectual development in the summer before he left Yazoo City for the University of Texas, one need know no more than that he was going steady with the baton-twirling daughter of a Delta plantation owner, and that he was voted by his classmates as most likely to succeed in his ambition to become a sports announcer.

During the middle 50's, the years Morris went to college, the banality of fraternity life and the crudity of the athletes—"jocks," they were then called—combined to give most universities their distinctive character. There were few schools where ideas were taken seriously. In fact, to anyone who grew up outside of New York during those years, there was little in Richard Hofstadter's *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* that could possibly have come as news. In such circumstances, the serious pursuit of learning often became an experience whose intensity rivaled that of a religious conversion. As in a religious conversion, all one's former values toppled, all one's past suddenly seemed profane. In other words, one experienced a breach with one's former self that could not easily be closed—ever. Most painful of all, a sense of distance tended to set in, corroding relationships with old friends. One was cut adrift.

Willie Morris underwent such a conversion at the University of Texas, but the interesting point in his case is that he seems always to have kept his moorings and never to have floated out much beyond the middle-distance. Apparently he has always been able to call on the old Willie—Willie the "good ole boy," the one voted most likely to succeed—whenever his services have been required. Thus at the University of Texas, the student body elected him editor of *The Daily Texan*. Later, as editor of *The Texas Observer*, his professional and personal indignation over the activities of the Texas legislature did not make it impossible for him to associate socially with some of the more reactionary legislators, and even to find some value in them as human beings. And neither New York's abrasiveness nor its intellectual rudeness, which he documents eloquently, has stood in the way of his succeeding once again.

This is not to suggest that Morris is some sort of Southern conman. The truth seems to be the reverse: he has a very low quota of that quality which ran so high in his maternal ancestors. What has served him so well is the ability—rare in anyone and at any time—to select those qualities from his own past which are most worthwhile and to assimilate them into his present self. Because of this, there is remarkably little bitterness in *North Toward Home*, and even less pretense.

MORRIS'S VIRTUES show themselves to advantage in his politics. He refers to himself as a liberal throughout the book, and that is what he is. But he is by nature too skeptical to possess the naivete which marks many liberals, and he has too much of a sense of humor to retain the solemnly doctrinaire aspects of liberalism. *North Toward Home* includes small essays in appreciation of those American liberals he most admires, among them Roger Baldwin and the scholarly Texas politician, Maury Maverick, Jr. (The one omission I felt most strongly was something similar on Ronnie Dugger, Morris's predecessor on *The Texas Observer*, who makes several all-too-brief appearances and who is perhaps the most interesting figure in Texas today.) From these and other passages one can gather the nature of Morris's own liberalism. It amounts to the recognition that the world is at best a hard place to live in, much too hard to warrant anyone's exploitation or unjust treatment of anyone else. In practical terms, this means that none of us has much of a chance unless to some extent we all live for one another and that there are already enough S.O.B.'s in the world without Willie Morris's joining their ranks.

But what finally makes Willie

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Morris so winning a writer is not his liberalism but his civility; his regard, that is to say, for individual people with their "flaws and weaknesses and absurdities." This quality shines forth more forcibly than any ideas discussed, incidents described, or people encountered in *North Toward Home*. It constitutes a minor achievement in itself that his writing retains civility in New York, a city which to most outsiders almost seems to exist in order to break it down. Certainly it is the quality most lacking in intellectual life today, and its absence makes that life, despite its brilliance, seem ultimately rather empty. Because civility runs so deep in Willie Morris, he is one of those few writers of whom J. D. Salinger's Holden Caulfield remarked that after you had read their books you wanted to call them up on the telephone.

CHANGE OF FAITH

THE NATURE OF CONVERSION: A STUDY OF FORTY-FIVE MEN AND WOMEN WHO CHANGED THEIR RELIGION. By ALBERT I. GORDON. *Beacon. 329 pp. $5.95.*

Reviewed by ERICH ISAAC

AMONG PSYCHOLOGISTS of religion, it is a well-known precept that conversion (inner) is an adolescent phenomenon. But what emerges from this new study of interfaith conversion—as well as from others—is that conversion (ecclesiastical) is a nuptial phenomenon. Indeed, according to the educated guesses of various denominational bureaucracies, no less than 90 per cent of all conversions are a prelude to, or product of, interfaith marriages.

In this respect, Gordon's sample of forty-five converts might be considered unrepresentative, for it produced a somewhat lower proportion of marriage-related changes of religion: only 75 per cent of the "cases" he studied converted prior to marriage, with a few others doing so some years later. But this discrepancy may be accidental. Gordon studied converts who were referred to him by ministers, priests, and rabbis; and this may have led to a bias in the direction

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of more "successful" conversions—presumably those effected for reasons other than marriage. Gordon's sample is also unrepresentative in another respect: fully thirty of his forty-five subjects converted to Judaism, and six converted away from it. Gordon justifies his selection on several grounds. Conversion to and from Judaism, he maintains, represents the most radical change of religion in American society; secondly, as a rabbi, he had greater access to the histories of converts to Judaism; and, finally, interfaith conversion is in any event "a process that varies only in minor details, whether the convert be Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, or of any other religion."

Gordon is only marginally concerned with the more profound psychological dimensions of the conversion process, perhaps because so few of the subjects he studied can be said to have experienced what William James called an "inner conversion," or what Jung and Robert Thoulless referred to as the surfacing of a "repressed complex." He divides his converts into three ideal types: *pro forma*, marginal, and authentic. Authentic converts are defined as those who change their religion not for "ulterior" motives, "negative" purposes, or reasons of "personal insecurity," but because of a religious search which has culminated for them in the finding of the "true religion."

When one reads Gordon's account of some examples of "authentic" changes of religion, one cannot but agree that the individuals so described are authentic converts. On the whole, however, Gordon's division of converts into three types is somewhat confusing. The category of "marginal" is especially peculiar. It seems to include all those individuals who tried to take their religion seriously but for some reason could not make the necessary adjustment. In other words, it seems to refer to a state of affairs that can exist only *after* conversion has already occurred. Presumably one changes one's religion either for authentic or inauthentic reasons; it can therefore be argued that there are only two kinds of converts, the authentic and the *pro forma*. In Gordon's book the typical member of the latter category is someone who has converted in order to please his or her spouse or new relatives; indifferent to his old religion prior to marriage, such a convert is equally indifferent to the new one. But the author never makes it quite clear who belongs in which category. At one point we are told that 31.1 per cent of the converts he studied must be classified as "authentic"; a little further on, however, all but 15 per cent are seen as "*pro forma*." Why this unaccountable shift? Gordon's statistics are somewhat less than illuminating.

Nevertheless, this is a useful book because it supplies information about converts to Judaism, who constitute two-thirds of the people studied by Gordon, and because it raises some important issues. For one thing, the book forces us to consider afresh the Jewish stance toward marriage-connected conversion. Orthodox Judaism tends simply to dismiss such conversion as inauthentic; Conservative and Reform groups are more amenable to it both in theory and in practice, but they too entertain strong reservations about the phenomenon. (It was not always thus. Interestingly enough, as late as the Crusades, the rabbis of Germany and France urged that conversion to Judaism be permitted even for such extrinsic reasons as the desire to marry a Jew—as long as the Jewish Court felt that the convert was likely to become an authentic Jew some time in the future.) The present Jewish attitude contrasts sharply to that of most Christian churches, which accept marriage-related conversion at least as the antechamber to a true inner conversion. Many a Christian convert to Judaism must therefore find it disconcerting when the supervising rabbi shows himself to be suspicious of the whole procedure. From the point of view of the rabbi, however, such suspicion is well-founded, for he knows that few converts subsequently have a genuine religious commitment.

NUPTIAL CONVERSION inevitably poses severe theological problems for Judaism, which has never validated a conversion formula with the power of sacrament; indeed, none of its ceremonials has this power. To be sure, ritual immersion and circumcision are halachic requirements, but one does not become Jewish by submitting to them in the way that one becomes a Christian by submitting to baptism. (A Jewish male is Jewish by birth and not by virtue of undergoing circumcision.) Thus, a rabbi can do little more than offer the prospective convert some lectures on Judaism, and these, as is generally admitted, are not particularly effective. The conversion rite at which the rabbi officiates differs from baptism in that it has no "saving power"; Judaism cannot even offer the rabbi the illusion that he has in fact accomplished something when he converts a Gentile marriage candidate.

Quite the contrary. The process of conversion is likely to drive home to the rabbi how little authentic Judaism exists in his own congregation. The Jewish ethnos is based on a religious covenant which created both the people and their faith at the same time. (Biblical and later sources emphasize that the Jewish people emerged from a veritable grab-bag of racial and national strains.) At the present juncture, however, the specifically ethnic component of this peculiarly constituted group works against a clear-cut religious identification. Hence the phenomenon of the secular Jew whose comfort—or burden—is that he will be a Jew regardless of what he does or believes. But this means that the Jewish collectivity which the convert enters is likely to consist of little more than certain habits of thought and behavior which are the distillation of millennia of minority survival. Until Jews accept, or believe in, the meta-sociological nature of their nation, it seems idle to hope that remedial measures like rabbinical follow-up—proposed by Gordon—will have any effect in changing *pro forma* converts into authentic ones.

It is, of course, true that authentic converts once posed problems for the Jewish community that need no longer trouble it today. For instance, it seems that in the post-Maccabean era converts were prone to an excessive zeal in halachic elaboration! During the

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Mishnaic era, they and their sons were well-represented among the officers of the Sanhedrin and among the leading scholars. Thus Rabbi Meir, the "light of the Sages," was of convert origin. A pupil of Rabbi Akiba—also rumored to be descended from converts—Meir was famous for his ability to adduce 150 reasons for declaring an object clean, and another 150 reasons for declaring it unclean. Rabbi Abraham Ha-Ger, a famous Hungarian proselyte scholar of the 12th century, may therefore have had a point when he interpreted the traditional dictum that converts are a pain in the neck to mean that they knew the law too well and thus put other Jews to shame.

In our time, however, it is the *pro forma* converts who pose the problem. So far, the main reaction of the Jewish religious establishments to this situation has been to fight a continuous rear-guard action against intermarriage. In line with this traditional stance, Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits of the United Kingdom has recently been reported as urging moral sanctions against intermarriage so that honor be withheld from what had previously brought "public dishonor and disgrace." Notwithstanding such gestures, it seems probable that intermarriage will continue, and that in an increasing proportion the non-Jewish partner will convert to Judaism. To be Jewish, after all, has become an "in thing," and it is possible that intermarriage may cease to be a source of considerable loss, at least in the numerical sense, to the Jewish community. According to an estimate in the *Toronto Globe & Mail*, 80 per cent of Jewish intermarriages result in the conversion of the non-Jewish partner to Judaism.

The fact that non-Jews are converting to Judaism in greater numbers poses difficulties for Judaism which it has not confronted since the Middle Ages, and which it so far has shown no sign of facing realistically. The main problem is this: if Judaism is to continue to present a message of universal significance, then its religious ethnos must become again what it once was—a *religious* ethnos. Until that

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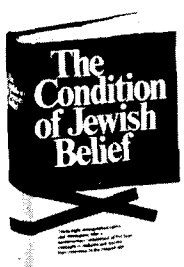

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happens, Judaism will not only be at a loss in dealing with marriage-related conversions; it will also be unable to muster anything but embarrassment in the face of such self-constituting Jewish groups as the Black Jews, whether of Harlem or South Africa, the Yellow Jews of Japan, and the Italian-Jewish peasants of San Nicandro. The historical reasons are abundantly clear for the Jewish abandonment of the old rabbinic view that Israel was to bring the world to God. What is not clear is how that view may be recovered.

A reading of Gordon's book is of little help in this respect, but it would be foolish to blame Gordon for that. He conducted his interviews with obvious empathy, and the record of them—many appear to be presented at full length—makes for absorbing reading. In addition, he has gone as far in the interpretation of the interview material as that material permits. But the "nature of conversion" can no more be defined by these autobiographical sketches than, say, the "nature of revolution" can be discovered by reading the life-histories of revolutionaries.

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A PRIMER OF IGNORANCE. By R. P. BLACKMUR. Edited with a Preface by JOSEPH FRANK. *Harcourt, Brace & World. 273 pp. $5.95.*

Reviewed by MORRIS DICKSTEIN

THE LITERARY CRITICISM of the late R. P. Blackmur has suffered a strange reversal of fortune in this country. In the 30's and even more so in the 40's—heyday of the New Criticism—he was a living legend while still young, commonly described as the ideal critic. In the 60's, however, his work has just as often been rejected as tortuous and unreadable. His last book, *Eleven Essays in the European Novel*, which appeared not long before his death in 1965, received almost no attention though it reprinted some extraordinarily good work. Lionized but not much appreciated at Princeton, where he taught, dismissed or respectfully ignored by the literary world at large, Blackmur gathered together in that book what he called "fragments of an unfinished ruin," the shored-up remains of a number of separate volumes he had planned to devote to the novel. It was a sad end, and the book did nothing to recapture the audience that had long since deserted him. Now a posthumous collection has appeared, titled and partly planned by Blackmur himself and edited by his distinguished literary executor, Joseph Frank. It is not a good book, and it has already suffered an even chillier fate than its predecessor. Yet it is a dense, almost a rich book, which should enable us to take stock of the later Blackmur in a more complex way than we have done until now.

IF MOST readers judge Blackmur's later work harshly, it is partly because he himself established so high a critical standard. Though the essays that he wrote in the 30's on the modern poets have begun to lose some of their force in the present climate of taste, they still constitute one of the notable critical projects of the century: a frontal assault on an elusive, demanding, and arrogantly new body of literature, an adventure not only in exegesis but in evaluation. Today poetry is changing in exciting ways, but Blackmur's individual essays on Eliot, Yeats, Pound, Stevens, and Hart Crane still have more to tell us than most book-length studies of these poets.

It would be a false emphasis to say that Blackmur never again found a subject so congenial to his powers. Henry Adams, James, and the European novel all were to evoke great work from him after 1940, and in fact two superb examples of this work are collected in the last section of *A Primer of Ignorance*: a study of James's artist fables, "In the Country of the Blue," and a brilliant discussion of Henry Adams's novels. But both these essays—included by the editor, it seems, largely to fill out the volume—are quite early, dating from 1943, and one comes upon them only after 175 pages of prose alternately murky and brilliant, gnomic and pompous, contorted and eloquent. They seize their subjects with a directness and lucidity, a sense of communicable purpose,

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that was all too often absent from Blackmur's work after 1950 or 1951.

This is especially true of the writings of the late 50's reprinted in the middle section of this volume, most of them ostensibly travel essays but actually very personal meditations on European and American cultural style. No reportage could be less journalistic than Blackmur's. In most journalism we get many facts, but recorded discretely rather than coherently so that their meanings remain enshrouded. In Blackmur the opposite is true: meaning is everything, but meaning is vitiated by the paucity of fact, the weak grasp upon the actual. His method is poetic rather than discursive: he turns objects into emblems and recurrent images, slight narratives into allegory, and elusive phrases into choruses and leitmotives. Strange juxtapositions lead to gnomic observations and conclusions, a wisdom that often seems arbitrary and self-reflexive.

The Jamesian obliqueness of these essays is very much a part of Blackmur's design. He listens for the timbre of a culture and watches its small, revealing gestures, seeking to put himself in touch with that culture's momentum and energy rather than to be taken in by its ideas about itself. This, I think, is the key to the book's title: the sense of "intimacy," Blackmur tells us in an obscure passage, is a "primer of ignorance." It is clear that "ignorance" is far from a pejorative word for the later Blackmur. In *The Lion and the Honeycomb,* he adopts for himself Santayana's plea that he is "an ignorant man, almost a poet." Ignorance to Blackmur means the poet's way of knowing, knowledge that is in the ear, the eye, and the fingertips as well as in the mind. It is precisely out of a quest for intimacy—and perhaps at the same time a lingering embarrassment at intimacy—that these travel essays become intuitive and haphazard, in style as well as in substance.

Paradoxically, it is the critic's sense of style that sometimes redeems the essays and makes Blackmur's intuitions convincing. In the best of them, "The Swan in Zürich," a comparison of American

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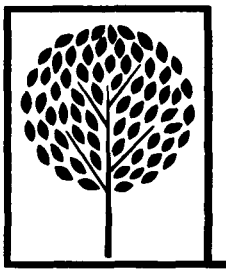

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and European ballet companies, of brilliant technical precision versus human warmth and vibrancy, he moves effortlessly from observations on styles of dance to generalizations about national style. Much to his own surprise, he opts in the end for intensity of life and plenitude of content over perfection of form. Watching a Spanish company "reputed to be very low stuff indeed as ballet goes," he is overcome:

> The "aesthetic distance" was there all right, but something in you crossed the distance, into the living unity that flowed in face and voice and body. . . . I was withdrawn into them and their clamor: into intimacy which was also access of knowledge.

In such a response—and these moments are the didactic texts in Blackmur's primer—we see a Blackmur very different from the skeptical rationalist and formalist of the 30's. In the 30's this autodidact rehearsed his education in public (like his hero, Adams), and the resulting primer taught everyone how to read. In the 50's he undertook to teach a generation of trained explicators to be ignorant again, for the sake of intimacy and a deeper access of knowledge.

Much of the strength and weakness of Blackmur's later work can be attributed to this undertaking, which seems to have been provoked not only by cultural changes but by a deep, perhaps unconscious disaffection with his own previous positions. It may perhaps be misleading to call the early Blackmur a formalist, for nowhere does he separate form from content or reduce his discussion to the externals of prosody or meter. Yet no one is more committed to "aesthetic distance," to an art which transmutes the chaos of personal emotion into order and objective form. Blackmur, like the rest of his generation, had gone to school with Eliot and learned from him the doctrine of the "objective correlative," learned from him that "poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion . . . not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality." It is no wonder that both Blackmur and Eliot felt so strong an animus toward Lawrence. Blackmur's early essay on Lawrence's poetry—where he accused Lawrence of the "hysteria" of disproportionate emotion, expressed in "language commonplace for everything except its intensity"—was one of his most tendentious and wrongheaded.

In the 40's when Blackmur turned from poetry to the European novel, particularly to Dostoevsky and to such modern masters as Mann and Joyce, he did more than change subjects. He moved to investigate the genesis of order in the chaos of immediate experience and to broaden his notion of form by studying writers who more closely reflected that chaos. Beyond the well-wrought urn loomed the loose and baggy monsters which seemed to embody so much of our turbulent inner life, and our public life as well. At the same time he began gingerly to distinguish himself from his friends, the New Critics, among whose number he had rightly been counted. He criticized their emphasis on analysis over judgment and showed how it tended toward a more narrow preoccupation with form. In an essay on Tate, Ransom, and I. A. Richards in *A Primer of Ignorance* he finds in their work "a tendency to make the analyzable features of the forms and techniques of poetry both the means of access to poetry and somehow the equivalent of its content." Of Ransom's essay on "Lycidas" ("A Poem Nearly Anonymous") Blackmur observes that

> there are no statements of importance in it as to what "Lycidas" is about; only statements about formal aspects of texture and structure. . . . There is no sense at all of that side of Milton which made the poet a builder of cities and maker of men or which made a good book the precious life blood of a master spirit.

Much of Blackmur's later project is revealed here, in words that shade off characteristically toward rhetoric. One can see that his travel to foreign cities is as much a part of the project as his meditations on Dostoevsky and his increasingly revisionist essays on criticism. His transformation becomes most decisive, however, in the four lectures on modern literature which

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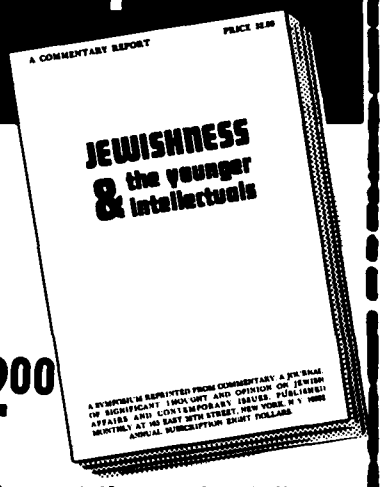

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comprise the first section of *A Primer of Ignorance*. The very titles suggest the extent to which Blackmur is willing to relax his commitment to order and give sway to the irrational and demonic explosions in modern writing: "Reason in the Madness of Letters" (the subtitle of the whole), "The Great Grasp of Unreason," "The Techniques of Trouble," "Irregular Metaphysics." Blackmur remains what he calls a "bourgeois humanist," but only by redefining bourgeois humanism into the broad and subversive doctrine it may once have been: "the treasure of residual reason in live relation to the madness of the senses." He is, as he says of Mann's heroes, a bourgeois humanist tainted by art, and this double perspective enables him to give so inward and yet so ambivalent an account of modern literature. We have here no academic embalming, but a testimony from within, the culmination of a lifetime of practice and contemplation and struggle. Blackmur grew up with these books, and he deserves to be heard.

Yet hearing him clearly is far from easy. The style is ruminative, the thought condensed but far from tight; as in travel essays, he eschews consecutive reasoning for odd confrontations and elusive paradoxes, in a language at once eccentric and exact, epigrammatic and quirky. He aims not to explicate these books but to prove them upon the pulses, to be intimate with them. But the abnegation of discursive procedure all too often turns intimacy into obscurity, and we are left merely puzzled when we should be amazed. The lecture on the poets, the third and weakest of the four, is a collection of page-long comparisons, at first obvious (Crane and Stevens, Pound and Whitman) but growing gradually more playful and arbitrary to the point of weirdness (Cummings and Dryden, Auden and Tennyson, Lord Byron and William Carlos Williams, Rilke, Herrick, and Emily Dickinson). By the end we feel trapped in a morass of intellectual gymnastics and merely verbal ingenuity—and this talk was delivered for the supposed edification of an audience at the Library of Congress! The more Blackmur sought intimacy and "the great grasp of unreason" the more clotted became his channels of communication, the more he resigned himself to a soliloquy in a void.

THIS IS NOT true of the fourth and best of these lectures, a quiet coda aptly titled "Contemplation," in which Blackmur for once allows himself the old luxury of extended observation, first of *Ulysses*, then of the criticism that accompanied the modernist upheaval. But on the whole, despite all the passages and formulations that merit our own extended contemplation, these lectures are unsatisfying, in content as well as in style. Even while his procedure forgoes rational design, Blackmur's reading of modern literature leaves too little room for the irrational. Thus, we find him quoting once more Eliot's attack in "East Coker" on "the general mess of imprecision of feeling/Undisciplined squads of emotions," without noting the repressive cast of mind on which it is based. Instead, he sees Eliot "finding reason in the madness that grasps him all about." For all his invocations of the demonic and the chthonic, there is a fundamental WASP civility about Blackmur that makes one feel he is only slumming in the lower depths. Reading Kafka could not have been easy for a man who had so closely identified himself with Adams and James, albeit with versions of these writers a good deal more subversive than their images in the academy.

But though art to Blackmur is necessarily subversive—providing "images of the deep anarchies out of which the order of the state must be remade if that order is to be vital"—in the end it was the commitment to order that remained paramount; Blackmur's attempt to be "ignorant" and to encompass unreason and anarchy was part of his intellectual growth, but his ultimate aim was to domesticate them and put them at the service of culture rather than of individual self-fulfillment.

This bias leads to some valuable emphases. Blackmur tells us that the irrational elements in modern literature were not ends in themselves but were pursued by writers with deep roots in the humanist

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tradition, with the hope—Blackmur's hope as well—of fulfilling rather than abolishing that tradition. The supposed neo-humanists of the 20's found Joyce's work chaotic, immoral, and scarcely intelligible. But to Blackmur it was only lesser writers like the dadaists who renounced form and critical perspective, captitulating to "pure behavior," to produce a fragmentary art which deified "things as they are." But he goes on to level the same charge in different ways against a number of greater writers as well. He creates a kind of classicist line in modern letters which enshrines Joyce, Mann, and Gide (perhaps even James), but which excludes not only the dadaists, but also Kafka, Lawrence, Faulkner, and Proust. *Ulysses* alone, he says, "is the book that *made* an order out of the substance of the dadaist imagination." One is reminded at moments of another bourgeois humanist, Georg Lukács, who wrote a book to prove that only Thomas Mann—but not Kafka—might be admitted to the Great Tradition. The controlling animus of Blackmur's 1935 essay on Lawrence is softened in these lectures, but not rescinded.

This classicist conception of form, though untenable as a critique of Lawrence or Kafka (whose work is no less organized for being organized uniquely), does raise serious questions about some recent art, such as pop painting, happenings, theatrical assaults like *The Brig*, or Burroughs's "cut-up" method, in which the syntax of significant organization does really suffer under the often random domination of "things as they are," much in the manner of dadaism. Are we to understand these developments as post-modern and post-humanist, or as radical continuations of the modernist movement of the 1920's? Blackmur was deeply concerned about this question. He saw the continuity between American art and American society and feared our tendency to give way to our own momentum and be mindlessly dominated by sheer behavior. (The bombing of North Vietnam began in the same month he died.) At a time when we have more than enough advocates of the New at any cost, who insist that

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Reviewed by MARY ELLMANN

THE CITY POOR begin to seem like the sick who die in the course of elaborate diagnosis. They recently underwent, first of all, statistical examination—scrupulous, controlled, and impersonal. Poverty was a curable disorder, a departure from the norm to which the poor might be returned by way of the mores and materials of the middle class. If this recommendation had been carried out rapidly and ideally, there might lie all about us now the speechless calm of social homogeneity. Instead, poverty remaining much the same, its study has continued and, if anything, begun to borrow upon the static quality of the subject. The emphasis has shifted from *What should be done about the poor*? to *What are the poor*? Alleviation in the future is implied, but the immediate effect is one of empathy. Solutions revert to problems again, and individual persons describe these problems. Increasingly, as Nathan Glazer* said of Oscar Lewis's *La Vida*, the formal representation of class yields to familiarity, and generalization to idiosyncrasy.

Joan Colebrook's study of five delinquent girls, *The Cross of Lassitude*, takes the next natural step in this subjective progress. Question: What remains obscure after the poor have expressed themselves, as they do in *La Vida*? Answer: Why, everything which they are incapable of expressing—their sensations, their fantasies, their immaterial hungers, the entire translation of poverty into the consciousness of the poor person. *The Cross of Lassitude* would be a novel, then, if its girls were not real people. Or it would be a psychiatric casebook, if its conclusions were reached with detachment and caution. But it is never quite either, always something of both. Like Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, the book is at once confined and limitless. What is done is information, what is felt is fiction.

Certainly, what these girls do will not do. By the age of seventeen, Frankie (Francesca), the most innocent of the five, has had an illegitimate baby and hit a nurse over the head with a water jug. Frankie is last seen serving a two-year sentence for the second offense, which at least postpones her entry into prostitution upon her release. Baby (Brenda), by twenty-one, is the white slave of a Lesbian addict named Pokey, in whose service Baby makes the mistake of soliciting a detective. She ends up in the same jail, Paragoula, as Frankie. Pug Nose (Ana), by seventeen, is a prostitute too. At the time of her arrest, she is controlled by Beppo (Beulah) Belgado, who is a twenty-one-year-old Lesbian pimp. Beppo, the most moneyed of the five, has a small school of girls whom she personally trains in taking abuse: they graduate to appointments with male sadists. Beppo works hard, her only self-indulgence is cocaine. Harry (Harriet) is a quiet unclubbable girl. She drinks anything that will ferment for her, steals cars, drives them one distance or another, and burns them. At the end of this book, Harry is in solitary confinement for having escaped (she is genuinely clever with locks) and been recaptured. The jail, then, becomes a model of the mixed neighborhood: Frankie is a Negro, Baby is Irish, Pug Nose is Polish, Harry is of French Canadian descent. The exotic Beppo, who remains at large, is a Portuguese-American Indian.

Miss Colebrook moves about at will among these five histories, describing them in animated and unnerving detail. The first impression of the whole, however, is one of physicality. Every misfortune or gratification is carnal. As small children, the girls are hurt most by their fathers' beatings. (Three of the five fathers here are at home, and everyone wishes they would go out more often. When men have nothing but physical strength to their credit, their families are black and blue.) Still, the children run and play in the streets, and enjoy themselves. Perhaps the saddest aspect of Beppo's Lesbian induction, at the age of eleven, is that she no longer plays outdoors after school. In adolescence, the girls advance as quickly as they can, and by any means, to adult pleasures: restaurant food, cigarettes, liquor, drugs, sex. These, too, like hopscotch or tag, are common to all classes; but they turn most quickly upon the poor into physical punishments. Beatings become less regular but far more dangerous: a father hesitates longer than a rapist or a pimp before he beats the girl to death. And the probability of all other injuries (tattoos, razor cuts, bullet wounds, alcoholism, overdoses of drugs, pregnancies and venereal diseases) mounts steadily. A hidden advantage of literate tastes, one realizes, is their physical safety. A middle-class person can go to a lecture on the system of free enterprise or read *The Journal of the Plague Year*, and wake up none the worse for it in the morning. For a time, the physical pleasures of the poor may be intense—Miss Colebrook's account of them, at any rate, has a vicarious heat—but their bodies are their own usurers. They pay for their kicks, like their TV sets, through the nose.

Yet Miss Colebrook detects in this seeming abandon the mere misapplication of common purposes. I worry about the way she speaks of the girls' psyches (they seem here as protrusive and self-evident as elbows or ears), but her psychology is tenable, nonetheless. The five girls are propelled, like other young people, by ambition and by loneliness. They hate the frowsy, scrabbling, ignominious nature of poverty; and, unwittingly, suffer from its atrophy of the affections. In other social classes, the desirous young are furnished with their bodies for love, and with their incomes or professions or trained talents for distinction. But the poor have only their bodies to invest in both legitimate purposes, which are then both inevitably thwarted. Through a young man called Loper Robinson, Miss Cole-

* COMMENTARY, February 1967.

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*David Daiches, COMMENTARY, September 1965

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brook argues that sexual attachment to a woman cannot survive her sexual commerce. But at the same time, the girls dread their mothers' monogamous defeats.

They show an almost exemplary respect for masculine authority, energy, enterprise, and success; but they find these traits only in pimps. The pimps are their cultural heroes, self-made men, flesh tycoons. They put girls on the market like convertibles—advertising new models, recalling defective motors, trading trade secrets. In the young, they create contempt of honest, ill-paid drudgery, envy of luxury and power. Of these five girls, all but Harry, the car-lover, attach themselves to the pimp ideal, either through prostitution or through emulation (taking the aggressive role in Lesbian relationships and becoming, like Pokey and Beppo, pimps themselves). Their lives suggest that, in poverty alone, the tolerable purposes of all social classes must eventually manifest themselves in criminal actions.

But I hope I have not, in this summary of her thesis, added to Miss Colebrook's own problem of oversimplification. Her reportage is immediate and graphic: the Negro speech, for example, has almost Claude Brown's veracity. But the sympathetic commentary is sometimes implausible and sometimes precious. It is implausible whenever the criminal action seems in *surprising* excess of the thoughts and feelings ascribed to the girl. Perhaps inescapably, sympathy diminishes the complexity of motivation. Loving the patient, one is reluctant to see his most ominous symptoms. Sympathy also diminishes control. The risk of not being bare and rigorous in studies of this sort is that of being decorative. Miss Colebrook's metaphors are occasionally apt and illuminative, but often not. They tend to be Homeric in the unhappy student sense of floating off and away from the business at hand.

> Ashamed to admit ignorance, Frankie asks no more questions but feels it necessary all the same to tear apart the veils which separate her from life. It is not enough to look at the flower of life, one must tear it to pieces, examine its form, test its texture, put it in one's mouth and devour it—petal, calyx, stem. . . .

EVERYONE MUST feel it is bad of Frankie to devour this flower; but, in fact, what else can she do with her life but eat it up? Even the most carefully nurtured organism eventually consumes itself. And ordinarily, prejudice is in favor of eagerness, curiosity, and daring in the young. But the life which Frankie is offered is ugly and dangerous, a crabgrass or deadly nightshade—or not really botanical at all. Even more than in utter fiction, in these half-real books the writing should probably be frugal. When it yields to conspicuous consumption, it does a faint but felt injustice to the subject of poverty.

BOOK REVIEWERS IN THIS ISSUE

PETER SCHRAG, *a new contributor, is associate education editor of the* Saturday Review *and author of* Village School Downtown.

JOSEPH EPSTEIN *contributed "Henry Luce & His Time" to our November 1967 issue.*

ERICH ISAAC, *a specialist in the geography of religion, teaches at the City University of New York.*

MORRIS DICKSTEIN, *another new contributor, is an assistant professor of English at Columbia.*

MARY ELLMANN's *review of* Children of Crisis *by Robert Coles appeared in the November 1967* COMMENTARY.

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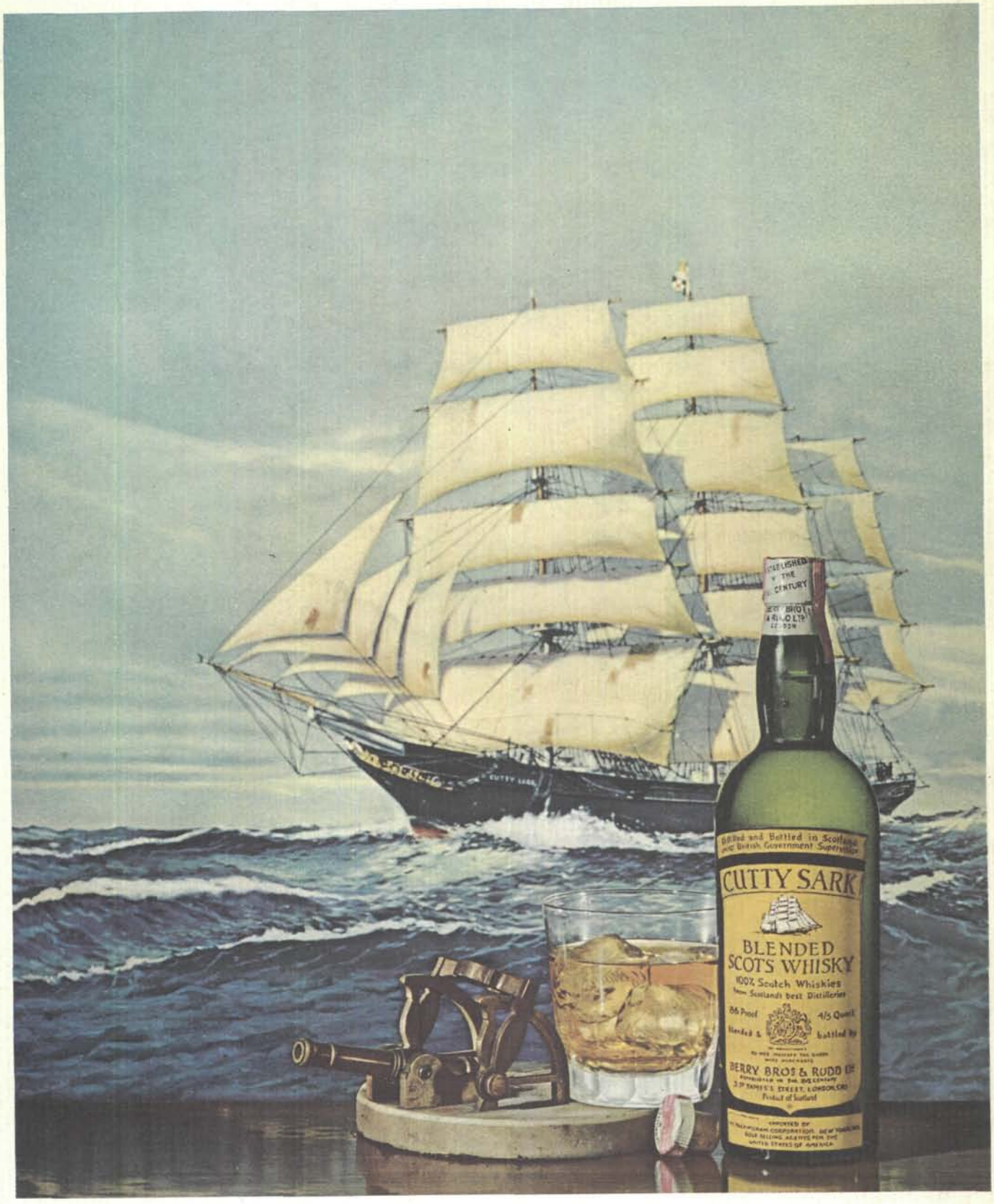

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